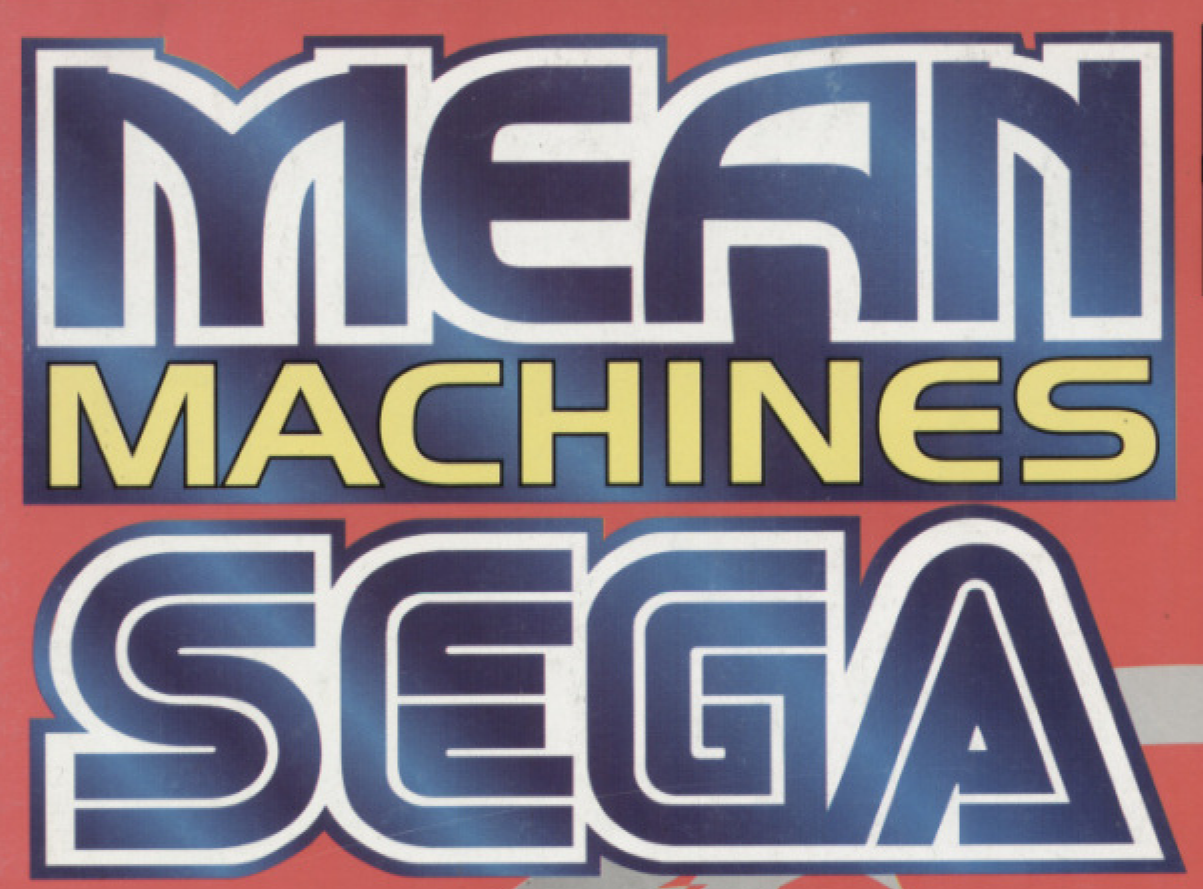
GUNS, FOOTY, DRAGONS AND BIRDS INSIDE!



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WORLD EXCLUSIVE!

ULTIMATE MORTAL KOMBAT ON SATURN

WORLD EXCLUSIVE!

BRIAN LARA '96 OWZAT!

WORLD EXCLUSIVE!

MAGIC CARPET REVIEWED





ecstasy
know the score

If you take ecstasy you're a human guinea pig because no one yet knows what the long term effects are. Loads of people have a good time without E.

The effect on the brain can make you feel good but it may also lead to depression, anxiety, panic and permanent brain damage.

Your heart rate speeds up, which combined with long periods of energetic dancing in a hot atmosphere means you could overheat. Drink a pint of water an hour if dancing, chill out regularly and keep your salt levels up to reduce this risk.

Even if the drug has been taken before it can lead to kidney and liver failure. Mixing E with other drugs or alcohol will increase the risks.

If you'd like more information or a talk, call us free and in confidence. Your call won't show on the bill.

national drugs hel?line
0800 77 66 00

wipEout

MOUNT SPEEDERS, LOWER NOSES, WIGGLE FLAPS AND THRUST! WIPEOUT BRINGS VICARIOUS NOSE-BLEED RACING THRILLS TO SEGA'S SATAN. SLOW DOWN YOU'RE GONNA CRASH.

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MEAN MACHINES EXCLUSIVE









wipEout®

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REGULARS

REVIEWS

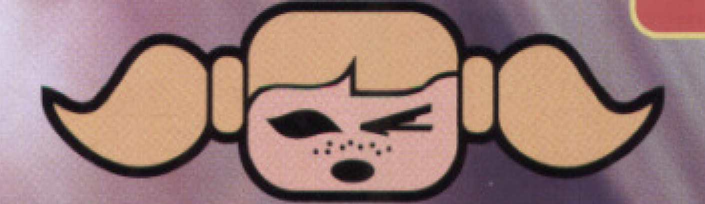
MEGADRIVE

SATURN

GAME GEAR

PREVIEWS





EDITORIAL

No complaints...

FROM, I have to admit, a poor start, this has turned into a stonking month for software and prospective games. There literally wasn't any time to stick in the latest on ISS Soccer on Megadrive, so that comes next month. What's more, the quality of most games, especially third-party stuff, is improving exponentially. Bullfrog's incredibly compulsive Magic Carpet is a case in point. But what I really wanted to tell you about was an incident that happened when Mark from Sega visited our new games room with the latest version of Panzer Dragoon II. From what we saw, the distance between first and second generation Saturn games is stupendous. There was one particular creature that dazzled everyone, not just with its size and speed, but the sheer deadly beauty of its execution. We'll share that one with you next month. There is nothing on the Playstation I can see with quite that stretch of imagination. I'd just like to leave you with a prediction of a third generation of Saturn games, which will be apart again from the standard of Rally, Cop and VF2. Panzer II is going to bridge these generations.

GUS





The MEAN MACHINES team throw open the doors of their luxurious new games room, a beautifully styled dream home deep in the heart of Farringdon's spectacular countryside. Toad E. Journo brings us this heartwarming exclusive.

COMMERCIAL BREAKDOWN

Everybody knows that the MEAN MACHINES team are normally unstoppable party animals. As the long winter evenings continue, however, we're finding ourselves stuck in front of the box . . .



GUS

"The tattier the better when it comes to me and TV commercials," says Angus, whose favourites include 'Andrex Ultra Challenge in Europe', the Iceland 'TV dinner couple' advert and the Vics Chloroseptic ad. "That's brilliant!" our square-eyed editor enthuses. "It looks like it's recorded on someone's old camcorder. I love the bit where the 'concerned middle-class wife' figure describes how her husband woke up with a sore throat and made a 'terrible mess.' What kind of 'terrible mess' exactly? It's intriguing. Over television commercials, my favourite telly time-fillers are public information films. You don't see so many of them now, but I fondly remember the likes of 'Charlie Says' and Tufty Squirrel. Ahh, halcyon days."



CLAIRE

Predictably, Claire played the cute 'n' cuddly card when asked about her favourite television commercial. "My favourite TV advert is the one for gas fires with sweet little animals," she says, hugging her new teddy bear, 'Hambelina'. "I really like the bit when the dog kisses the cat, and the cat turns around and kisses the mouse." Regular viewers of Dennis Norden's 'hilarious' It'll Be Alright On The Night programmes will, however, know the tragic truth behind the commercial – the animals turned on each other soon after the director shouted 'cut'. The pain is too much for our Art Editor and her teddy bear to cope with: "It's not true! It's not! It's not!" she cries, tears streaming down her face. Claire was quite upset, too.



MARCUS

"I've just got six words to say about crap TV commercials," claims Marcus. "Ahh, monsieur is really spoiling us!" Actually, he's got considerably more than six words to say on the subject. "The hilariously badly dubbed Ferrero Rocher advert must surely stand alone at the foot of the heap," he says, "although there's strong competition from the likes of Ricola throat losenges and Kinda eggs. Bob Hoskins gets on my wick too – don't you just want to smack him one? Of course, all these belong to a cheesy tradition that can be traced back to the Shake and Vac woman and beyond. Did you know she now makes cabaret appearances performing the legendary carpet-cleaning routine? And another thing..." Yeah, alright.




"We're such a close family," says Steve, reclining on the new sofa the team insisted was essential for their strenuous games-testing routine. "We let Steve play Street Fighter The Movie if he's been good," smiles Lucy. "He's such a bright lad – he'll go far. We're very happy."



After years of therapy, Gus has at last found true fulfilment in the games room. "It's where I do all my entertaining," he says. "I'm so happy."



Claire and Gus were delighted by a recent surprise – the patter of tiny paws. Hambelina is their first child. "I'm very happy" says the teddy bear.



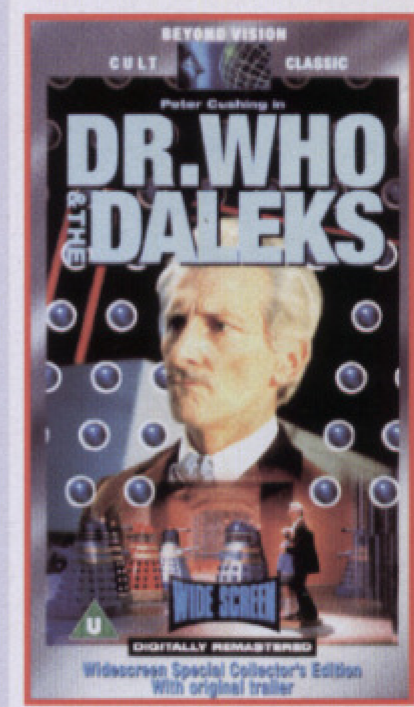
LUCY

Geordie role-models are difficult to find on television at the best of times, and they're especially thin on the ground in commercials-land. Lucy has a hero in Rockin' Robin, the porky red-breasted Northerner who sings the praises of Rocky biscuits. "They're choc a block, man!" she grins, a recent chubbiness in the cheek department betraying a fondness that goes beyond watching the television commercials. "My next favourite is the 'Diet Coke Break' advert where the office girls watch the brickie guzzle a can of pop at eleven o' clock every morning. At ten o' clock every morning Claire and I admire Gus drinking his Coke and munching his egg and onion sandwiches in a very similar way. Not."



STEVE

"That Territorial Army advert creases me up," says Steve. "I for one would gladly give up my weekends to spend them knee-deep in mud in the Shetlands. Learning how to kill people. The new Fiat ad is a grin as well. 'Which one shall we have?' the bloke asks his 'children' in a case of crap dubbing so appalling it could get him a starring role in the next Ferrero Rocher ad." Our Steve's recently become a bit of a star himself, getting a favourable write-up for his footballing prowess in The Cheshunt and Waltham Mercury. "They said I was 'in fine fettle' and 'linked well with the more experienced members of the team.'" he beams proudly. So what was the final score in this headlining match, Steve? "Erm, 0-0..."



DOCTOR WHO GIVEAWAY

Steve Merrett may be gone, but the rest of us are still Doctor Who bonkers in the MEAN MACHINES office. To celebrate the long-overdue return of telly's top Time Lord in a brand new TV movie, we're looking back to the very first Doctor Who film. And giving a load of them away. Dr Who and the Daleks has just been released on the home of classic sci-fi, Warner Brothers' Beyond Vision label, at a mere £12.99. For your dosh you get the widescreen version of this lurid little masterpiece on a tape which also includes the tittersome trailer.

To be in with a chance of winning one of five copies of Dr Who and the Daleks that we're giving away, simply tell us who'll be playing the new Doctor Who in the forthcoming TV movie. Is it:

a) Joe McGann
b) Paul McGann
c) Steve Merrett

Send your entries on a postcard or sealed down envelope to SINK PLUNGER at the editorial address. All entries must be received by 15th April 1996,. Multiple entries will be exterminated!

MEDIA WHORES

BOB HOSKINS
Steve 'triple action' Merrett
JOANNA LUMLEY
Angus 'terrible mess' Swan
RUBY WAX
Claire 'Um Bongo' Coulthard
NANETTE NEWMAN
Marcus 'Chicken Tonight' Hearn
MAUREEN LIPMAN
Lucy 'it's good to talk' Hill
PATRICK ALLEN
Steven 'ghastly aftermath' Key

MRS. BOB HOSKINS
Liza Merret
BIRTHDAY GIRL
Tina Hicks

SPECIAL THANKS TO: Simon for the party tickets, Cathy Campos, Paul and Hugh, Rich E

SPECIAL NO THANKS TO: THE STYLE FASCISTS

EDITORIAL DREAM HOME: EMAP Images Ltd, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU
TELEPHONE: 0171-972 6700
FAX: 0171-972 6701
PRINTING BY: Cooper Clegg
COLOUR: Sarah-Jane Leavey, Gary Lord and Sarah Best
DISTRIBUTION: BBC Frontline
PRINTED IN THE UK

COVER:Ultimate Mortal Kombat by Claire. Age 27. All her own work.

SUBSCRIPTION & BACK ISSUE ENQUIRIES
TOWER PUBLISHING
TOWER HOUSE
SOVEREIGN PARK
LATHKILL ST
MARKET HARBORO
LEICESTER
LE16 9ET
TEL: 01858-468888

SUBSCRIPTION RATES (12 ISSUES INC P&P)
United Kingdom and BFPO: £30.00
Overseas Surface Mail: £36.00
Airmail Europe and Eire: £42.00
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THE ENDING BIT
Love is a stranger in an open car, to tempt you in and drive you far away. Well, in Rich E's case, a bloody big black sedan has just pulled into the kerb. Steady as she goes mate. And I send my love to my deep sea diver.

NEWS

KILLING FIELDS



PROJECT OVERKILL

BY: KONAMI

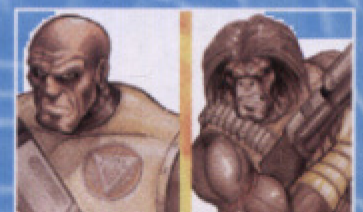
SATURN

RELEASE: AUTUMN 1996

ORIGIN: JAPAN

Konami plan to burst back into the Saturn market from this autumn with an ambitious new strategic shooter that should blow away their cuddly image forever. We've procured the first pictures of Project Overkill, an isometric view shoot 'em up set in a series of interlinked bunkers. Player characters are an elite band of special forces operatives each with their own specific weaponry, including rocket launchers grenades and what's best described as an exploding pet.

The game's graphic use of gore and gratuitous violence make it set to be both a shock and snigger-fest, as your merciless warriors headbutt, pistol whip and splatter brains Pulp Fiction-stylee left, right and centre. Normally, Konami would make changes to the European versions because of strict German rules on the depiction of violence in video games. Overkill, however, will probably be the first in a new policy of not altering games for the whole European market, which is less pragmatic than just reprogramming the German version. Quite right as, after all, we did win the war.







PSYGGIES CRASH THE PA

Pysgnosis formally announced their intention to publish four of their Playstation titles for Sega Saturn before the Summer. Although the Wipeout story was broken some months ago by MEAN MACHINES (to some consternation at Sony) only now have Destruction Derby, Discworld and Lemmings 3-D been confirmed. Taking into account Pysgnosis' stated intention to once more be a multi-format developer, it would not be a surprise to see further titles like Krazy Ivan and Assault Rigs join the tally. We'd like to take this opportunity to welcome the boys back into the Sega fold again.

VARIOUS TITLES

BY: PSYGNOSIS

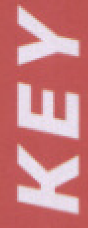
SATURN

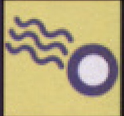
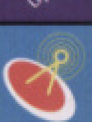
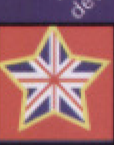
RELEASE: SUMMER 1996

ORIGIN: UK



There has been an amazing flurry of activity for Saturn this month, following Sega's triumphant Christmas in Japan, and the making up of lost ground in the US and Europe. Thus a packed news file for your perusal...



competition 
new game 
japan news 
tipped for the top 
exclusive news 
film news 
news update 
arcade conversion 
gossip  
british development 













VIRGIN OLYMPICS





DECATHLON

BY: VIRGIN

SATURN

RELEASE: SEPTEMBER

ORIGIN: US

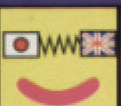
With the Olympics approaching, minds (reluctantly at MEAN MACHINES) turn to sport, that most unrewarding and pointless of activities. We've no objection to Virgin's development of a Decathlon game, however. Initially a Playstation project, Decathlon will be released for Saturn too, and features a range of novel control methods to replicate the traditional events of running, jumping, jumping while running and the pole thing. More news as it comes.





ARTY

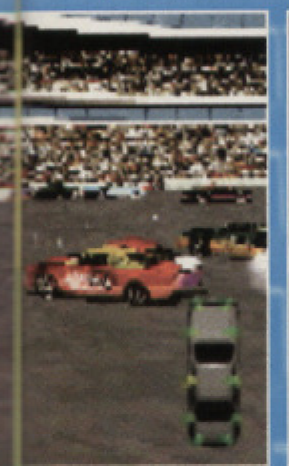






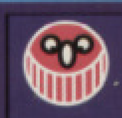








DEM BONES



SKELETON WARRIORS

BY: PLAYMATES

SATURN

RELEASE: 1996

ORIGIN: US

American game giant Playmates have completed a horizontally-scrolling 'epic battle of light and darkness' known as Skeleton Warriors. It's received a fair amount of attention in the U.S, as it features some groovy psuedo-3-D perspective to its many levels and uses quite a few effects to beef out the frantic hack and slash action. MEAN MACHINES musical expert was most interested in the contribution of Tommy Tallarrico, whose studios have provided a stunning orchestral score to the game. Tallaricco, who earned his spurs at Virgin before coming the rich darling of the computer music world, should further enhance his reputation with a score which pays homage to Vangelis, Carl Orff and others, in our opinion including influences of the 'Big 5' Russian composers of the late Romantic era.





MOTORING SECTION



SPEED FREAKS





TITLE: NEED FOR SPEED

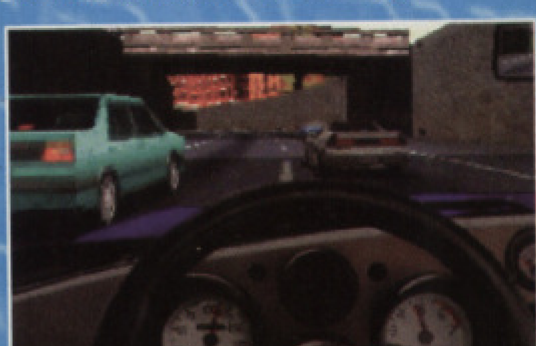
PUBLISHER: EA

SATURN

RELEASE: JUNE 1996

ORIGIN: US

EA have provided an unexpected but welcome surprise in their announcement of a Saturn version of the popular 3DO title, Need for Speed, sometime in the middle of the year. The game is best described as a driving simulation, rather than a racing game. The unusual graphics depict the expanse of the open road, and levels consist of long picturesque drives. The game won acclaim on 3DO for its distinctive and realistic handling, and the amazing pile-up crashes that are possible. There are no details of any enhancements or changes due, but we hope to see something of the game for next month's issue.



HIGH IMPACT



TITLE: IMPACT RACING

PUBLISHER: JVC

SATURN

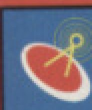
RELEASE: JUNE 1996

ORIGIN: IRELAND

Perhaps best described as Hi Octane on four wheels, Impact Racing is a post apocalyptic driving game with a difference – your vehicle is armed with mines, lasers and other devices designed to inflict all manner of unpleasantries on the victims of your road rage. Drive through a futuristic concrete jungle, a snowy Swiss village and, er, outer space, in your mission to blow your opponents off the road. Impact Racing is being developed by Funcom in Dublin for release by JVC this summer.



RALLY ROMPS HOME





The 'Feelgood Factor' emerging at Sega was enhanced with sales for Sega Rally which leapt to the top of the CD Sales chart after a single day in the shops. Rally has been such a massive hit that, in its first week, it recorded the largest sale of any CD game ever — beating all previous Playstation or PC CD-ROM weekly sales! In the end there was no need for Sega's own spurious 'don't pay your car tax' PR stunt, which entreated all Saturn owners to play Sega Rally instead of driving to work. Another scandalous snippet — the Toyota team who sponsored one of the Sega cars have actually been banned from competition for a year after cheating!

ZORKED




TITLE: RETURN TO ZORK

PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION

SATURN

RELEASE: MARCH

ORIGIN: USA

A descendant of Zork, the great grand-daddy of all adventure games, Return To Zork has been knocking around on PC since 1993, thrilling RPG buffs with its mixture of necromancy, FMV and amusing actors shot against blue-screen backdrops. A Saturn version with a new graphic interface and improved control is just about to appear in Japan, and the UK conversion is surprisingly close behind. Veteran software house Activision are currently converting this cinematic sequel in the hope its mix of bearded wizards and buxom babes will put a spell on console owners as well. Review soon.





OVERLOAD



TITLE: LOADED

PUBLISHER: GREMLIN

SATURN

RELEASE: MAY

ORIGIN: BRITAIN

The latest top Playstation title to jump ship onto the Saturn is Gremlin's gory shoot 'em up Loaded. Scheduled for a May release, Loaded gives you the chance to play as one of six mercenaries (Mamma, Cap'n Hands, Vox, Butch, Bounca and Fwank) attempting to bust out of a prison to get revenge on F.U.B., the guy that framed them. Each character has their own special ability and obligatory huge weapon to combat the menaces in a game which Gremlin are promising will feature state of the art light-sourcing and topper 3-D animation. The soundtrack stays faithful to the Playstation original, featuring RSVP and Kick To Kill, two tracks from Pop Will Eat Itself's current album, Two Fingers My Friends. Stay tuned for a preview.



X-PERT WITNESS





One of the major Megadrive projects currently in development is X-Perts, an ambitious beat 'em up with adventure/ strategy co-elements. The project was initially shown way back at last year's CES show in May, and Sega originally planned a Christmas release. Development has been put back to change the emphasis of the game from purely combat to puzzle-solving as well. X-Perts refers to an elite infiltration band whose mission is to sabotage a large enemy complex shaped rather like a 32X. The game boasts realtime interaction between the different player characters, a huge-playing area, wads of special items and digitised sprites for the fighters.

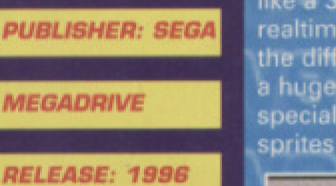
TITLE: X-PERTS

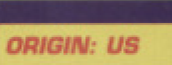
PUBLISHER: SEGA

MEGADRIVE

RELEASE: 1996

ORIGIN: US







CHILDREN ABUSE





Back in Japan, where the cult of Virtua Fighter 2 is only marginally less popular than the one which takes carrier bags of poison gas onto tube trains, a new variation is set to hit the arcades. VF Kids is as cute as it sounds, with each character depicted as a young person. Although based on the Model 2 board, same as VF2, the graphics have a simpler, more naive air. Whether VF Kids ever reaches the UK remains to be seen.

TITLE: VF KIDS

PUBLISHER: SEGA

ARCADE

RELEASE: TBC

ORIGIN: JAPAN



GOS





The gossip mongers have been taking Bob Hoskins' advice this month: it's good to talk: Let's talk!

Our first port of call is Acclaim, who have signed up the most revolting title in game history (no, we don't mean Cutthroat Island). Bad Mojo is the slimy brainchild of maverick American coders Pulse Entertainment. Basically, you play a cockroach scuttling around a horrible room climbing over dead rats and burning spiders with fag ends. We love it, and we're trying our best to persuade them to do a Saturn conversion (it's only PC CD-ROM at present).

Staying at Acclaim, work on Alien Trilogy is going on feverishly, but for a while it was even more feverish on Playstation. Apparently, the licensors, Fox, phoned Acclaim pointing out that their contract allowed them to repossess the license to Alien Trilogy if a version wasn't released by a certain date. Voila! a hastily finished Playstation version. Us Saturn owners can expect a significantly enhanced version sometime in the early summer.

So who are Fox? Well, Fox Interactive are an offshoot of the Rupert Murdoch-owned Fox Studios, and they want to get into games in a big way. Their first big project is Die Hard Trilogy (notice a trend?), being programmed at Acclaim owned Probe Software in Croydon. Elements of all three films are combined in a Virtua Cop-style extravaganza.

Back in the real world, Warwickshire-based Codemasters, while planning their own Saturn titles are talking about doing a 'Big in Japan' label, of import titles they think would do well over here. Maybe due in the Autumn, the Robo-Pit game is coming under serious scrutiny as a first release. There's even talk of getting the Designers Republic in to do the packaging.

Over at Virgin US, packaging is the last thing on people's minds. It's whether Cool Spot will get back on track. Rapidly becoming the Macbeth of games, it's been put back again to a September date. Seemingly, someone at the top walked out on the project, exacerbating the delays. Virgin's other big projects: Heart of Darkness

GOS



and Toonstruck (for PC) also show no danger of a rush-release in their present situation.

Which must please Eurocom, who got their Cool Spot out of the way last year. Now with Ultimate MK3 out of the way, the expanding Midlands coders have moved out of their 'Iraqi war bunker' into a nice grey office-block. They've also begged us not to reveal their new partners for a licensed game. Disney Interactive. Whoops, sorry guys. From programming to PR, and the travails at Interplay, who have had the runaround with naughty mags of late. First up was the Casper fiasco, with several mags reviewing an unfinished, late Alpha version of the game. We, of course, did not. Now there's the Descent debacle. Our good friends at Sega Power flourished an 'exclusive preview' of the Saturn version in last issue. Well if you call speculation and PC screenshots an exclusive there you have it. The actual word from Interplay is a release delayed until September and no Saturn code at present.

Movie News. Ocean have conceded that a Megadrive version of Mission: Impossible is now, well, impossible, but a Saturn version is on the cards to match the approaching summer blockbuster starring Tom Cruise (looking very nice, it appears).

Finally, The Things Sega Do Pt. 1: Despite a review this ish, Sega UK have backed off Shining Wisdom, as they have other RPGs to release - including Dark Saviour and hopefully Mystaria 2 this Christmas! However, there is a whisper going round about possible double packs of games, eg. Shining Wisdom and Rayearth, which would give phenomenal value and bypass the problem of too many games.

The Things Sega Do Pt. 2: Supposedly someone at Sega of America came up with the idea of changing the title of Baku Baku Animal (funky) to Zany Zoo (pathetic). We leave you with the conundrum: Why do so many people at SOA appear to have no idea about games. But don't phone — it's just for fun.



JAM AND SPOON





TITLE: SLAM AND JAM '96

PUBLISHER: BMG

SATURN

RELEASE: MAY

ORIGIN: US

BMG's next release from Crystal Dynamics schedule of Status Quo proportions is Slam and Jam '96, the only basketball game planned since Acclaim's NBA Jam conversion. Slam and Jam takes, in our view and not to denigrate the Williams' game, a more ambitious approach, with a roving 3-D perspective of the court. It's received much favour on 3DO, and according to BMG, is one of titles they most want to release on Saturn. The '96 version enjoys the added bonus of endorsement from two of NBA's big star names: Mario Kassar and Magic Johnson.



STAFF WRITER 2000



Telstar's sole Saturn entry in their schedule of forthcoming releases is Starfighter 3000. The Telstar boys promise a game that "puts you in control of the most lethal flying machine the 31st century has ever seen." Well there's a novelty. Basically an airborne shoot 'em up, this first appeared on 3DO and Telstar promise an overhaul for the Saturn version. Starfighter 3000 has been developed by Krisalis Software, the company who handled the Saturn conversions of Theme Park, Hi Octane and Magic Carpet for Bullfrog.

TITLE: STARFIGHTER 3000

PUBLISHER: TELSTAR

SATURN

RELEASE: MAY

ORIGIN: BRITAIN

WIN! WIN! WING!





As you'll see from our Out Now section, the much delayed Wing Arms is given a couple of small hooks in the review process but emerges generally unscathed as one of our mates. And to celebrate, Sega are offering one lucky reader the chance of owning a Virtua Stick controller. Shaped like a plane joystick this is the DBs as far games like Wing Arms and Panzer Dragoon is concerned. The Virtual Stick isn't being widely released in the UK, so this is a pretty exclusive gift. Three other readers get the chance to 'merely' win copies of Wing Arms and enjoy its Kamikaze thrills. And now the question:

Q:What event provoked the entry of the USA into the Second World War?

Send answers to TORA! TORA! TORA!, MEAN MACHINES SEGA, 30-32 FARRINGDON LANE, LONDON, EC1R 3AU. Normal competition rules apply. Closing date 6th April 1996.





CREAM OF SEGA

Welcome to this month's update on Sega's movers and shakers, all provided by those generous chaps at Gallup and authorised in an 'official regulating body' kinda way by ELSPA. In addition to the official Saturn and Megadrive sales chart, this month we're printing the results of our first Cream of Sega readers' poll. Numbers in brackets indicate titles' positions on last issue's chart.

HYPE CHART

What you, and we, are most looking forward to.

1 (-)
WIPEOUT
Eagerly anticipated by staff and readers alike.

2 (-)
DARK STALKERS
The Capcom vintage holds considerable promise.

3 (-)
ALIEN TRILOGY
Doom with real monsters. We're afraid. Very afraid.

4 (-)
PANZER DRAGOON 2
A stunning work in progress has whetted our appetites.

5 (1)
MANX TT
The only survivor from last month's chart, displaced by more immediate goodies.

BE AN OPINION FORMER

Each month we'll be listing your favourite Saturn titles and the games you're most looking forward to. Just fill in the coupon and tell us what you think. Also, take a guess at what the most popular game of the month will be. One of those smart enough to predict what's at the top of the readers' chart will win a copy of that game!

MY TOP THREE SATURN GAMES ARE:

____
____
____

I'M MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO:

____
____
____

I PREDICT THE MOST POPULAR GAME WILL BE:

____

NAME:

ADDRESS:

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SALES CHART: SATURN

Gallup's survey of the best-selling CDs.

1 (-)
SEGA RALLY (Sega)
In with a bullet for the last of 'the Big Three'.

2 (1)
VIRTUA FIGHTER 2 (Sega)
Continually strong sales for the classiest beat 'em up of all.

3 (2)
FIFA SOCCER '96 (EA)
An unrivalled new instalment in the FIFA saga.

4 (-)
WORMS (Team 17)
The addictive puzzle game proves a surprising dark horse.

5 (3)
FIRESTORM: THUNDERHAWK 2 (Core)
Core's shoot 'em up is still top gun.

6 (4)
VIRTUA COP (Sega)
Dogged by supply shortages – more guns are on the way.

7 (-)
JOHNNY BAZOOKATONE (US Gold)
Unbelievable – this game blows goats.

8 (5)
DAYTONA USA (Sega)
The gameplay's still there, but it's looking rough round the edges.

9 (8)
THEME PARK (Bullfrog)
Little movement on this hardy perennial.

10 (-)
MYSTARIA: REALMS OF LORE (Sega)
The Saturn's first real RPG nudges in.

ELSPA

SALES CHART: MEGADRIVE

Gallup's guide to what's shifting 16-bit style.

1 (1)
FIFA SOCCER '96 (EA)
Quality and brand loyalty keep this in premier position.

2 (3)
SONIC AND KNUCKLES (Sega)
Yours for less than twenty quid.

3 (2)
PREMIER MANAGER (Sega)
100,000 copies sold and rising.

4 (4)
MICRO MACHINES '96 (Codemasters)
Deserved classic status here.

5 (5)
MICKEY MANIA (Sony)
Like Sonic and Knuckles, this is another heavily discounted oldie.

6 (6)
PGA TOUR '96 (EA)
Who'd have thought golf could be this good?

7 (7)
MICRO MACHINES 2 (Codemasters)
Still going strong, alongside the sequel.

8 (8)
ECCO 2 :TIDES OF TIME (Sega)
Ambiet thrills with our nosey friend.

9 (-)
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2 (Sega)
The best Sonic of all is back.

10 (9)
BRIAN LARA CRICKET (Codemasters)
The sequel's on the way.

ELSPA

OFFICE CHART SATURN

Our choice of next generation titles.

1 (4)
SEGA RALLY
Ages like a fine wine – this just gets better the more you explore it.

2 (1)
VIRTUA FIGHTER 2
Still smart, but Rally is proving more addictive.

3 (2)
FIFA '96
The ultimate console footy is still without serious challengers.

4 (-)
GUARDIAN HEROES
"Bonkers multi-player mayhem!" enthuses an addicted Steve.

5 (-)
WING ARMS
Available here at last, and re-discovered by Gus and Marcus.

READERS CHART SATURN

Your choice of the best Saturn titles.

1
SEGA RALLY
Deserved success for the finest driving game ever.

2
VIRTUA FIGHTER 2
Only just behind – the finest beat 'em up around.

3
VIRTUA COP
Clean up the streets from the comfort of your own home.

4
FIFA '96
Relegated by the Big Three, but for how long?

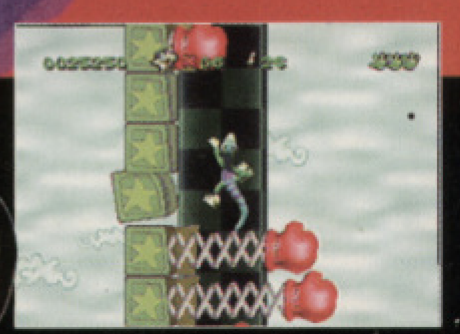
5
FIRESTORM: THUNDERHAWK 2
Core's cracking copter crashes in at 5.

GEX™

Do not adjust your horizontal hold. 450 frames of GEX animation, CD-quality sound and hand-rendered backgrounds.

Advance thru different worlds like Indiana Jonesville and Frank N. Steintown. (Legal weasels require we be vague.)

For strength, speed, and that healthy reptilian glow.



Try jumping, tail-whipping & face-sticking to discover secretlevels/bonus stages that only Irv in Engineering knows about.

Get ready for one serious See-Food Cocktail. It's GEX, your **bug munching, tongue-lashing** alter-ego. Oh yeah, we got **Hungry-Man** portions of pop-culture cheese all right. With late night **TV freaks** like **Gamera** and **Flatulence Man.** But it's our special sauce—over 300 hilarious one-liners and sound effects from HBO® comedian Dana Gould—that give GEX **major attitude.** So forget about good taste. And go with the skanky bug **du jour** instead.





Electronic Gaming Monthly **"Editors' Choice Gold Award"**
Diehard Gamefan **"Character of the Year"**

NEW for Sega Saturn™ and the PlayStation™ game console.

CRYSTAL DYNAMICS™

DISTRIBUTED BY BMG INTERACTIVE







BY: GT

GAME TYPE: BEAT EM 'UP

PRICE: TBA

RELEASE: MAY '96

1-2 PLAYERS

COMPLETE

Many were taken by surprise when Acclaim parted company with the Mortal Kombat series. The original and the sequel had been 'cash cows' for the firm, and had partly built its reputation for spawning blockbusters. Contracts end, however, and when the big A's deal with Williams came to an end, there was a big player ready to step in.

GT Interactive is not a name to arouse Saturn owners, but then they haven't released any games. Confidently, they have chosen Ultimate Mortal Kombat to be their first Sega release. Confidence is warranted, since the actual coding has been performed by Derbyshire programmers Eurocom, originally brought to attention for their work on Jungle Book (Megadrive), Earthworm Jim (Game Gear) and the impressive Cool Spot Goes to Hollywood.

Eurocom were originally entrusted to create a Saturn version of the MK3 arcade machine, which was due some months after the Playstation version (a state of affairs dictated by Sony paying a ridiculous fee for a three month 'exclusion' period). Dare we suggest this arrangement has worked in the Saturn's favour, as Williams began working on an arcade update 'Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3' some months after, released around Christmas. Tragically, this was too late to affect the completed Playstation game, but Eurocom approached Williams with the idea of introducing all the extra features from the Ultimate coin-op into the Saturn version. The result was a few months extra programming, and a substantially augmented edition of a hit game, all for no extra cost!

MK3 itself is now the classic definition of the beat 'em up. Four years ago Capcom were riding the crest of a wave with Streetfighter II, then, much to their surprise, the 'parvenu' Mortal Kombat overtook it in popularity in the States and Europe, on the back of hyped home conversions and aggressive updates that sharpened the gameplay and broadened its gory appeal.

ULTI









IS IT LIKE THE ARCADE?

Yes. Eurocom have had access to arcade code for all the characters, animation, sound files and even animated logo sequences. The faithfulness includes the removal of the arcade's attract mode (lots of tossy stories about the contenders taken out of Ultimate Mortal Kombat). More importantly, it means the inclusion of the seven new characters, including three secret ones not present in MK3. Graphically, the sprites are 85% sized from the original, the reduction being necessary to maintain the screen ratio. The mid-resolution mode the Saturn uses is very close to that of the coin-op, so it looks spot on. At Eurocom, an arcade PCB is running alongside the Saturn version in development, and they look as if hatched from a single egg.







MORTAL KOMPACT

The valiant effort to fit this massive game inside the Saturn should not be underestimated. The problem lies in the 2MB of RAM within which all the moves of both characters, background graphics and sound effects must be kept. To ease this, the speech and fatalities at the end of each round are loaded separately as needed. The Saturn's superior spot-loading means this should be less intrusive than it seems on the Playstation.

WISH YOU WERE HERE

Ultimate is an opportunity to visit four more Outworld holiday locations. The best are Desert (where an animated half-buried Cyrax struggles in the dunes) and Hell, made up of pillars of skulls shrouded in a fiery mist. This stage supports its own new pit fatality. Cavern is a palatial environment with the MK Dragon symbol embossed on the floor and Waterfront depicts a riverside scene in a derelict city. This is not pictured, as work on the river is one of the last things to be completed. These new scenes are automatically selected more often than the others when you first play.

A TRAINSPOTTER'S GUIDE

There are loads of characters to play as and to fight against in this version of Kombat, and unfortunately, far too many for us to cover in any great depth. But here is a brief look at each character just to whet your appetites.

ENCORE: OLD KARACTERS RESTORED TO ULTIMATE




#1 KITANA

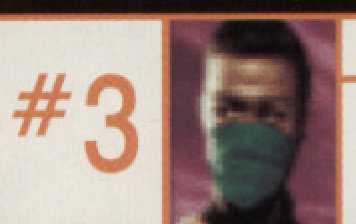
Omitted from MK 3, she has made a return for this version, sporting a revealing new outfit and a touch up for her Stretch kiss fatality.






#2 REPTILE

Included again in this version, Reptile has had his arsenal boosted with a new Dash Punch, improved Acid Spit, and a new fatality for you to muse over.

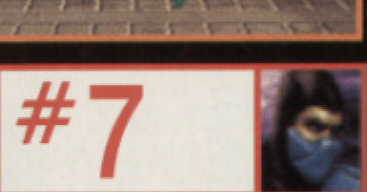



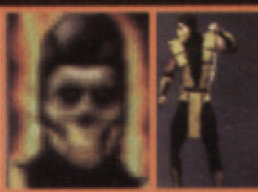


#3 JADE

Originally an unplayable secret character from Kombat 2, she has made the transition to a selectable fighter. Her Spike Fatality is particularly nasty.





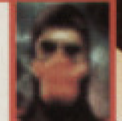



#4 SCORPION

Another character who has made it back into this latest version, he has acquired a new Hellraiser fatality that relies more on sound effects than graphics.



KARACTERS REVEALED WITH KOMBAT KODES



#5 ERMAC

Caused a bit of a stir in the arcade version when a bug in the system caused 'Ermac' to appear. Ermac actually means Error Machine, and was just a glitch.








#6 MILEENA

She is one of the hidden fighters and can be found by entering the correct Kombat Kode. She remains largely the same as in the other versions.



#7 CLASSIC SUB ZERO

As mentioned before, this is the old Subby from the other games. Again, he is accessed by entering a Kombat Kode. There was initially some confusion with some people believing Classic Sub was actually a new character called Rain.

OLD FAITHFULS



JAX

After gaining his metal arms for MK 3, it appears that rust has set in – this guy as he stays largely similar to the previous game.













KUNG LAO

Has survived since MK 2, and is probably an O.A.P compared to the others. His Hat Slice fatality now cuts the opponent into three little pieces.







KANO

Missing from 2, found in 3, the hard man of the game is back. Check out his Skeleton Removal fatality for Ultimate chuckles. He also has a new vertical roll.









LIU KANG

The second bloke to make it all the way through, he has the benefit of probably the funniest fatality: The Arcade Squash.







SHANG TSUNG

One of only two characters to have stayed through every game, he has slowly developed loads of morphs, due to more and more characters being added.







KARACTERS NEW IN MK3



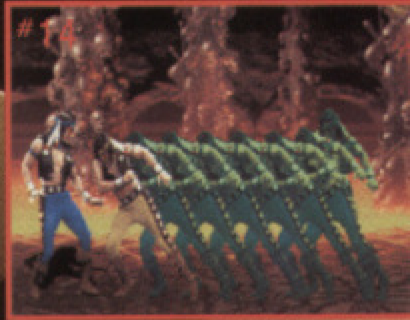
SMOKE

Yes, he is playable in this version without any cheats. This time he retains his robot assassin type character, and dumps the Ninja robe a la Reptile.











NIGHTWOLF

After making his debut in 3, Nightwolf keeps his position in the starting line up. Because of his lack of new moves, people may not persevere with him.





SEKTOR

One of the three Ninja Assassins to make the game who specialise in killing specified targets. In this case, Sub Zero is the man he is after.



SUB ZERO

This is the new Sub Zero without a Ninja uniform. Slicker moves than the old character, but then you have a choice.

















SINDEL

The former bride of Shao Kahn, she died 10,000 years ago only to be bought back to life to help him gain power by making the Kombat Tournament.











STRYKER

One of the new characters to appear in the third incarnation, he has stayed in for this version, and now has a new gun shot move (excellenté).

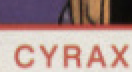


CYRAX

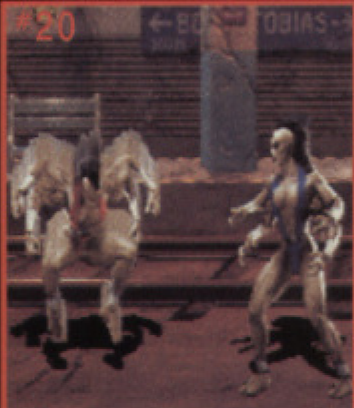
The second Ninja assassin, he is also on the trail of Sub Zero. Unlike his alter ego, however, he has the ability to perform a self-destruct fatality.















SHEEVA

Originates from the same race as Goro, and keeps many of the same moves like the stomp. To prove she is not of this planet, she also has green blood.



KABAL

Made his premiere in the third outing, and stays for Ultimate. His spin move now stops closer to the opponent when you pass them.



















First of all, how did this state of affairs come to pass? Last October, Wipeout was being rubbed in the face of every Saturn owner or Sega supporter, a symbol both of the Sony Playstation's power and the Saturn's inherent weakness. The game flew off the shelves in much the same manner as its gravity-defying star vehicles. It was 'the game that Saturn couldn't handle'. Now, barely more than a month into 1996, a near-complete version of Wipeout is gracing a Saturn in Sega's own Chiswick headquarters. Is this not like Winston Churchill offering to publish an English translation of Mein Kampf?. Maybe not, as Pysgnosis must have had plans for Wipeout on Saturn months before then. Games like this don't write themselves in a matter of weeks. Although the unofficial announcement of the Wipeout conversion, published just before Christmas, must have had unwelcome timing for Sony, now with the heat of competition fading for another six months, Pysgnosis have resumed their highly-pragmatic posture as a multi-format developer, seeking to maximise the demand for their titles on all commercially-viable formats. Wipeout is the first concrete example of the new policy, and its arrival cannot help be boosted by the near-hysterical praise lavished on the original. But can the Saturn handle it?





CLASS WAR

The vision is designer racing teams. Four of them, with territorial allegiances and individual technologies. Each team supports two star pilots, each demanding their own iconographic identification:

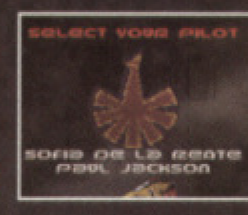


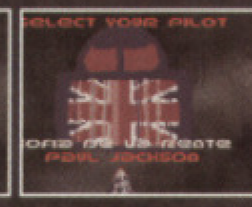




Best all-round team, with adequate cornering and above-average acceleration. AG craft are light and responsive, but prone to buffeting by other vehicles.







Europe's entry into world speeder racing. Everybody wants a Feisar for Christmas, but are they serious machines? Novices will love their handling and acceleration, but only while they have provisional licenses.







A North-American team who put together heavy-duty racing machines with excellent top speed. Too much of a handful in the hands of the inexperienced.







Monster machines from the Eurasian engineers. Heavy and slow-turning, only the cool and the accomplished will be able to handle the Qirex craft, but nothing else will get in their way.





wipEout®

DESIGNER DEATH



Weapons play a major part in every Wipeout tournament, allowing confrontations of Hill/Schumacher proportions. A single charge of each Wipeout power-up is gained by running over the coloured pads built into the racing surface. What you get is denoted by a stylish icon: shock-wave, boost, shield, mine and missile are all on offer.




SHOCK-WAVE


BOOST


SHIELD


MINE




MISSILE

'The reason to buy a Playstation' has now become a reason to buy a Saturn. Gus looked at the bewildering arrival of the blistering Wipeout.











ROAD RAGE



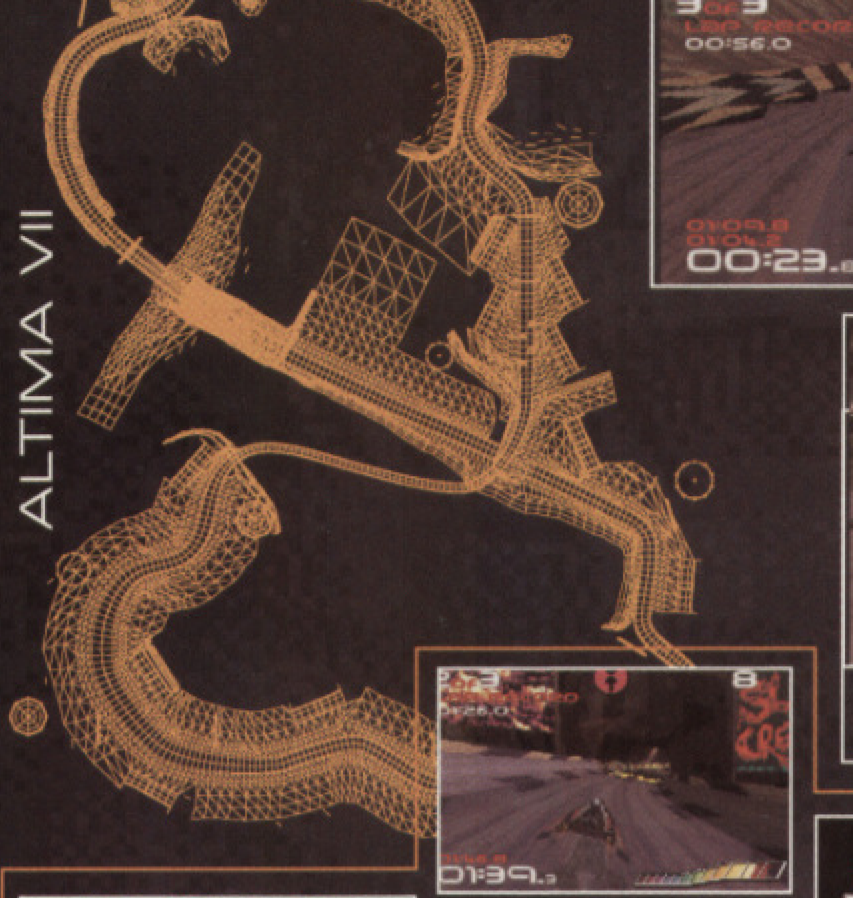
TERRAMAX

LOCATION: GERMANY
LENGTH: 4.1KM
121M
F3600 RACING STANDARD

Generally, not the most exciting course visually, apart from the central feature of a long gridded suspension bridge. The challenge comes from two separate, unforgiving jumps that demand a high level of speed to successfully cross.









Just what the hell is "reclaimed titanium" when it's at home? Eh?

KARBONIS

LOCATION: JAPAN
LENGTH: 3.4 KM
HEIGHT: 107M
SURFACE: RECLAIMED TITANIUM

The 'Rocky Mountain Way' of Wipeout. An outdoor course of wide space and extraordinary natural beauty. Expect long twisting, banked turns and saw-tooth bridges. Keep an eye out for two exotic Buddhas which look strangely out of place.



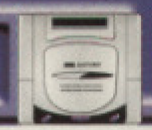


ALTIMA VII

LOCATION: CANADA
LENGTH: 5.5KM
HEIGHT: 359M
F3600 RACING STANDARD

The beginner course, but no walkover. Altima has one large jump into an intimidating cliff face which introduces the aerodynamic concept. After the fall comes a huge scoop rise out of the cliff tunnel before soaring across an arching scaffolded flyover. An uplifting ride.







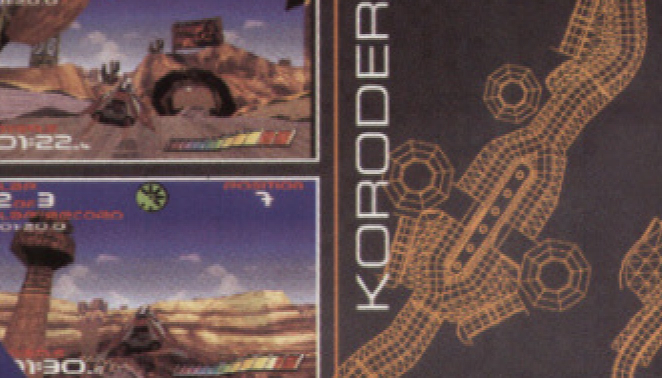
ARRIDOS

LOCATION: USA
LENGTH: 6.04KM
HEIGHT: 245M
SURFACE: BLASTED SANDSTONE

A stunning trip through a series of arid canyons, lined with layered sedimentary rock foundations. A sense of low ceiling in the many tunnels, and a choice of routes to take past animated mining equipment and rusty iron supports.







KORODERA

KORODERA

LOCATION: RUSSIA
LENGTH: 5.4KM
HEIGHT: 210M
SURFACE: CARBONIC IRON

Our favourite: an urban, dystopian post-industrial nightmare. Ride through what looks like communist Eastern Europe (or Birmingham). Corners are ludicrously sharp, tunnels dangerously dark, and the smokestack scenery a constant distraction.

WHEELIE WORLD

Set in a wheel-redundant future, Wipeout's craft handle differently to those in any other racing game. Conventional left/right joypad movements are used for banking, which is effective for light steering. More radical turning involves the use of the top joypad buttons which activate the twin air-brakes on each craft. Added to this, is the technique of raising or lowering the pitch of the long 'nose' of the speeder, which affects the aerodynamics at various key sections of each course. True Wipeout skill comes with using all controls to complement each other.



LINK-UP?

Note: at this time Sega and Psygnosis are in discussion over a link-up cable mode for Wipeout. As the game has a limited period of development left, it's unclear whether it will be possible to incorporate it.



SILVERSTREAM

LOCATION: GREENLAND
LENGTH: 6.4KM
HEIGHT: 232M
SURFACE: ARTIFICIAL CRYSTAL

Incredible Arctic scenery belies the savage nature of this toboggan ride of a course, with mountainous ridges cresting into huge dips. There are three different routes to take on a journey through yawning caverns ornamented by rows of gleaming icicles.







One man and his dragon proved a popular turn last year. Sega return with Panzer 'Zwei'. We have vays of making you play.

Panzer Dragoon was one of the most significant Saturn games of 1995. Not just 'significant' in that Sega sent out loads of press releases and review copies, and all the magazines provided reams of eager coverage. It had a deeper significance as a bold, imaginative project that would define the ingenuity and flair of Sega's development as well as the power of its machine. It didn't quite work out that way. Panzer was a fantastic piece of work, but undeniably flawed.

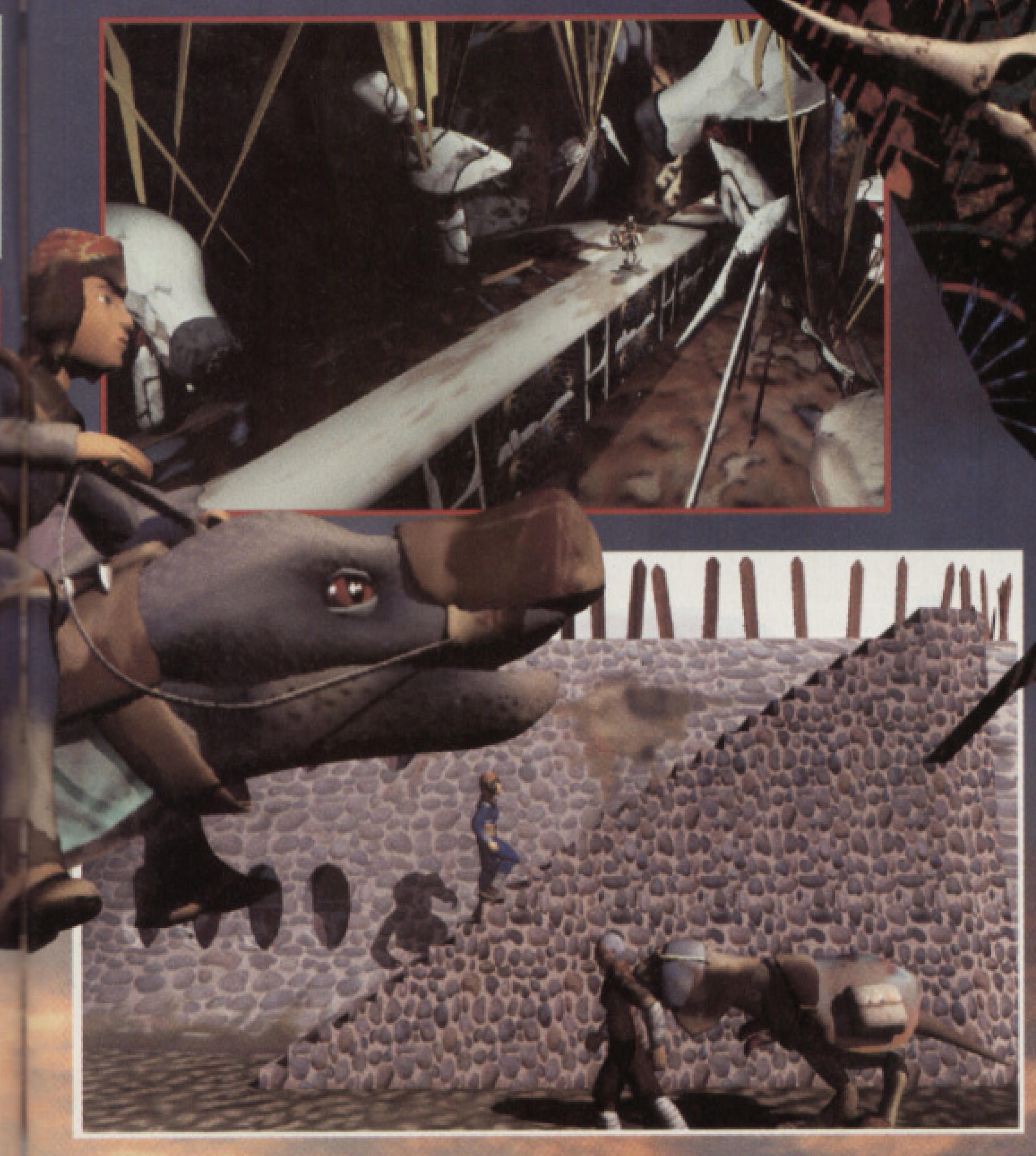
Not entirely surprising considering the history. Andromeda, a small Tokyo based developer, had been working on a version of the title almost since the first operating system of the Saturn appeared. Work towards the launch of both system and game was seemingly in tandem: Panzer Dragoon first appeared as a demo: 'shooting game', and looked, by the standards at the time, mind-blowing.

When the finished product appeared in March '95, much of that original promise was fulfilled. The game had a cinematic sweep and a sense of drama heightened by amazing end-of-level confrontations. It also had two obvious weaknesses: it was too short and too linear.

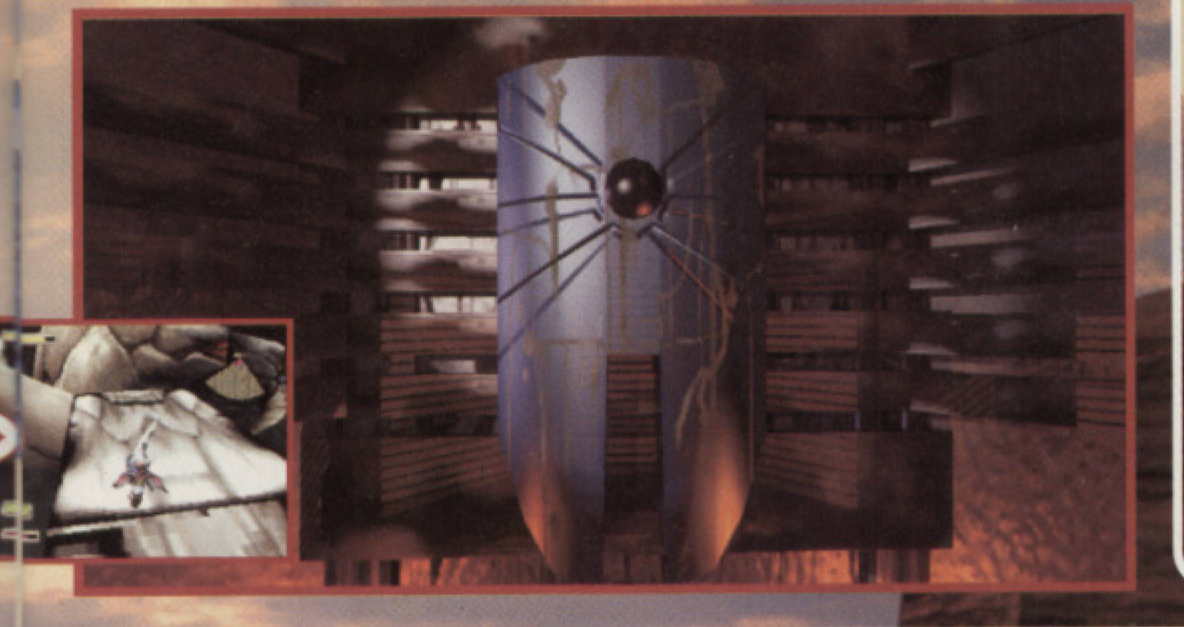
Andromeda have been working on the follow-up since then. Although the game genre is the same, it's quickly apparent that Andromeda have addressed some of the original complaints — linearity being chief amongst them. The team have also had the benefit of a year's development in Saturn programming and the results extracted from the machine during that interval have improved dramatically.



Panzer Dragoon II Zwei







BIG AREA

Andromeda have given the player a greater sense of freedom by increasing the size of the playing area. Each level is wider from right to left, but more importantly, a new sense of height is given. This works best when the panzer is running on the ground, as he can look up at the scenery for an incredibly effective panorama effect.





RUNNING UP THAT HILL

A clue to one of the game's new scenarios comes from the original Panzer Dragoon's non-playable introduction. There, the rider is seen on a ground-based mount, exploring the canyons of a desert wasteland. Andromeda have taken this as a basis for riding sections, with dragon and rider fighting from the ground.The programmers have, at some points, interchanged the game modes dramatically. One, for example, has the running dragon launching himself into the air from the edge of a huge precipice.



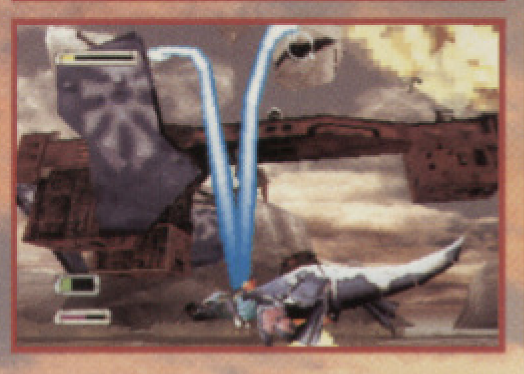
WORLDBUILDERS

MEAN MACHINES has seen the most up-to-date version of the game, which still only displays three levels. The variety within the play areas is more pronounced than the original game, with much more complex graphical scenery. So far, each has one incredible boss.

EPISODE 1

The introductory level is scenically reminiscent of the original game's plot intro. There is initially a running section within a sequence of majestic canyons. Forks in the canyon force you to choose different routes through the levels. The canny player will take the right hand route which leads to a breathtaking assault on a long fortified canyon, armoured trains trundle overhead on towering battlements. The climax to the level is a huge airborne bomb ship which dumps massive crates, forcing you to dodge them like that bit in the Volvo ad.











EPISODE 2

This trip through a deep forest shows the remarkable leap in visual standards between the first and second game. Layers of lavish parallax create the illusion of dense foliage, with your dragon weaving in and out of huge tree trunks under a vast canopy of leaves. The remarkably tranquil atmosphere gives way to a terrifying boss encounter with a creature inspired by Giger's Alien. A huge powerful quadraped, it lunges, leaps, swings from the trees and casts poisonous pods. Arguably one of the most dramatic encounters in Saturn gaming.



EPISODE 3

A far from complete version of this level was on the disc. It was playable, but full of rough edges and rather confused. Basically, it reprises the level four setting of the the first game — a network of underground tunnels, tackled at a reckless, rollercoaster pace. There's a spooky interlude section where the panzer is menaced by huge spider-like sentinels, but this is all just build-up for the incredible finale. Surrounded by water, channelled onto a narrow bridge of stone blocks, the panzer spots something lurking under the surface of the water. It's your worst nightmare...















Last year's Story of Thor was hailed as an instant Megadrive classic. Developers Ancient cast aside preconceptions of how Megadrive graphics should look, recreating a bold, colourful storybook world. Thor also offered a uniquely violent style of RPG gameplay. Thor baby might not have been the smartest adventurer ever, but he was supple!

And for Saturn Thor, Ancient have put him through further athletic paces. At first sight, and indeed play, Thor doesn't seem to offer much progression beyond the 16-bit version. Graphically it's very much in the same style: same colourful, spicy locations, identical overhead perspective. Thor himself reprises the skills of kicking the fur off rats and climbing lots of steps.

A closer inspection of the game, at the Alpha stage of debugging, reveals a really lavish adventure with some fantastic high-resolution detail, and potentially a much bigger quest than the first game. Although the game shares many of its aspects with its forerunner, almost all of these are improved substantially.

Thor is expected to be finished in the next couple of months, but an English translation may delay the UK release until some time in the summer. It'll be very welcome at MEAN MACHINES.

We go living a boy's adventure tale again in Ancient's Saturn translation of the Megadrive classic, Story of Thor.



MARTIAL ART

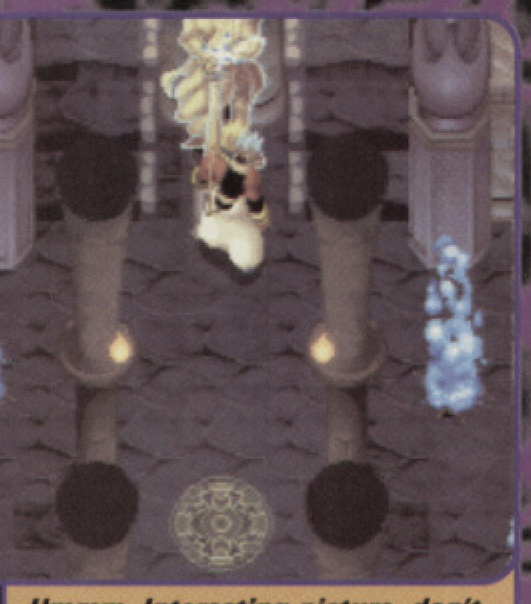
Thor's intriguing combat system uses new weapons and player skill to make Thor more powerful throughout the game. Thor's base weapon, a curvaceous scimitar, can be used for all kinds of attacks if you can wiggle the joypad correctly. The other weapons (at this stage a bow and rod, but bound to increase) work with various moves too. Which is good, as Thor's enemies become more imposing the further he travels from home.





Hanging Gardens of Babylon it ain't, but more exciting than Babylon bloody Zoo.





Hmmm. Interesting picture, don't you think? Great for captioning.

IN THEIR ELEMENT

The elemental sidekick idea returns, with Thor out to find six compliant spirits who lend their power to his. Again, the familiar forms of Ditto (water spirit) and Efreet (fire spirit) give the sequel a strong sense of continuity, but the later elementals are mysterious first-timers.



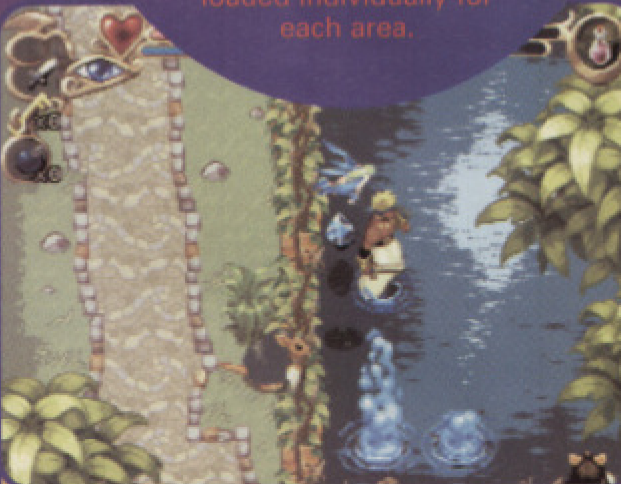






THANK YOU FOR...

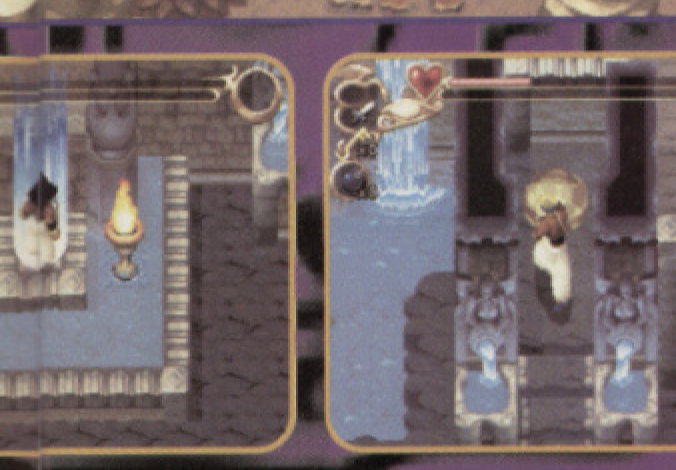
Original Thor benefited from an unusual musical 'score' provided by the high-priest of computer music, Yuzo Koshiro. He has re-used tracks and created new ones with the same texture of frantic violins for Saturn Thor. The quality of the sound effects is excellent, with a range of sounds loaded individually for each area.



As you stroll down the river, a giant rat has decided to try and write his name in the water. Had a slash, in other words.



Watching a drunk Ed Lomas attempting VF2 impressions provides much inspirataion for this caption.







PROJECT	CUTTHROAT ISLAND
PUBLISHER	ACCLAIM
INITIATED	JULY '95
RELEASE	APRIL '96
FORMAT	MEGADRVE
DEVELOPERS	SOFTWARE CREATIONS

CUTTHROAT ISLAND

Just when we thought we'd seen it all, someone goes and comes up with a fencing game. Yes, a slice 'em up. With a Geena Davis sprite as your heroine. All based around a bizarre pirate film so incredibly expensive that it jolly rogered its production company, who have since sunk without trace. Doesn't exactly sound like a sure-fire winner, does it?

This recipe for success, or otherwise, is distinctive if nothing else. Not since Pirate's Gold a few years back has anyone tackled the pirate 'genre' in gaming – it seemed that Hollywood was just as reticent until Cutthroat Island, the Geena Davis/Matthew Modine movie that this game is based on – commenced production. You play Ms Davis's flame-haired pirate captain in the game, which sees you swash your buckle (whatever that's supposed to mean) across 22 levels of beat 'em up style shenanigans livened up with the odd platform and minecart chase to keep things interesting. Thrust and parry through hordes of nasty blokes with bigger swords than you've got, picking up useful objects and pieces of a fragmented treasure map which, when assembled, will lead the way to Cutthroat Island. If you dare, swash your buckle with Auntie Geena and set sail for adventure...





If for some strange reason Geena Davies is reading: stick to weepies.



I've nothing against women pirates, but not ones with rubber lips.

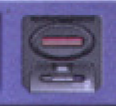


TREASURE ISLAND



The game follows the same plot as the film – the year is 1688 and feared lady pirate Morgan Adams inherits a piece of a treasure map from her dying father. It is one third of a map leading the way to Cutthroat Island, and the untold riches that are buried there. Unfortunately, Morgan's uncle, the blackguard Dawg Brown is also aware of the map, and is searching the Caribbean for the directions leading to the spot on Cutthroat Island marked with an X. He'll stop at nothing, including Morgan and his own brother, to get the map. Meanwhile, the pirate-hunting Governor Ainslee is out to stop anyone getting their hands on anything, and sets out out to put a stop to their Jolly Roger-hoisting. Simple, eh?





...OAT ISLAND

MAP'S THE WAY TO DO IT

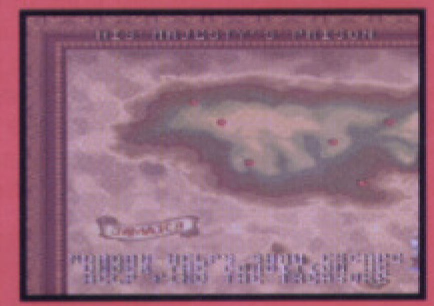
In true Errol Flynn fashion, your journey across exotic climes is portrayed by joining the dots on your gradually assembled map. Each blob is a different level of the game, and X marks the spot for the treasure.

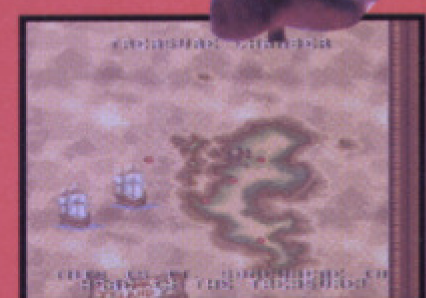


CARIBBEAN CRUISE

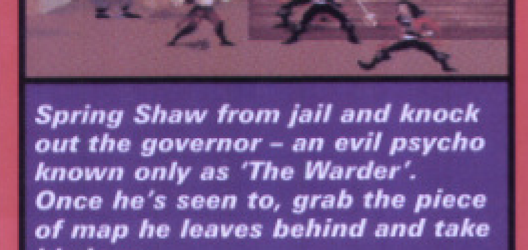
One or two players can pummel their way through this pirate adventure in either 'brawling mode' (fisticuffs) or 'swashbuckling mode' (fencing). Play as either Morgan or her bit of stuff Shaw, and blaze a trail across the screen - backwards and forwards as well as left or right in Streets of Rage style - from Jamaica to Cutthroat Island. Successful completion of certain levels grants you the ability to use new special moves. Handy defence in a journey fraught with danger....











Spring Shaw from jail and knock out the governor – an evil psycho known only as 'The Warder'. Once he's seen to, grab the piece of map he leaves behind and take his keys.



Dodge the trees and boulders in this quarry cart chase. Sharp reflexes and a good memory for what's derailed you previously is the only way to get through this high-speed slalom.



On Cutthroat island itself you'll have the perils of the jungle to contend with. Watch out for monkeys, the deadly Dawg Brown and if you get that sinking feeling, just keep paddling...

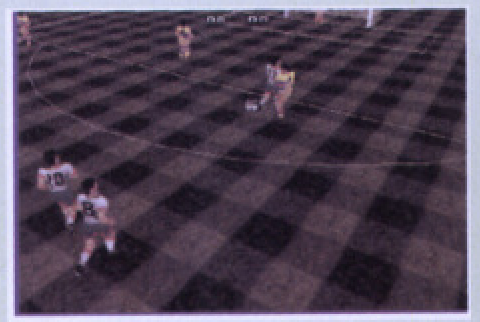


Can you believe that England actually qualified for the forthcoming Euro '96 Championships? No, neither can we. Forgetting the fact that because we are the hosts, we didn't have to qualify, it's still quite an achievement. And we get to play Scotland as well! (For the benefit of all the Scottish readers, you get the chance to play England as well! For all the Irish and Welsh readers, tough titty, you didn't quite make it.) And the people from France/Spain/Anywhere in Europe can rest at ease as they don't have to worry about the English yobbos coming over and drinking their beer and smashing their shops.

Aside from our obvious duncery in the football stakes, Sega, who are not ones to pass up the opportunity for a quick game tie-in, have snapped up the rights for the Euro '96 licence, and have been hard at work in order to bring you the game in time for the tournament itself. Those of you who are in the know will undoubtedly recognise the game as being not too dissimilar to Actua Soccer on the Playstation from Gremlin Graphics, and you'd be right, because it is. Except that it's effectively Actua 2.

When the game was commissioned, the programmers set out with a basic aim: there was to be no resemblance to a run of the mill sequel, as certain other football games now have a habit of being. For a start, the new Saturn development tools have been used to boost the players' colours from a paltry 32 to a buxom 256, and all of the player movements have undergone a bit of surgery too – there are new goal celebrations, the players have a few more tricks up their sleeves, and they have all benefited from an increased number of animation frames.

And the news that will please most of you, is that it will be tenfold better than the Playstation version. In fact, the programmers have used the Sony game as a test run for this, ironing out its faults to make it even better. The graphics may look a bit dodgy in the screenshots, but rest assured that they will improve dramatically by the time the finished version appears. The game is currently 80% complete, but the final 20% is to be spent polishing up the graphics substantially. For those final touches, a team of ten programmers are going through it with a fine-toothed comb, searching out any remaining glitches.





This screenshot is for the benefit of all the people reading in black and white.

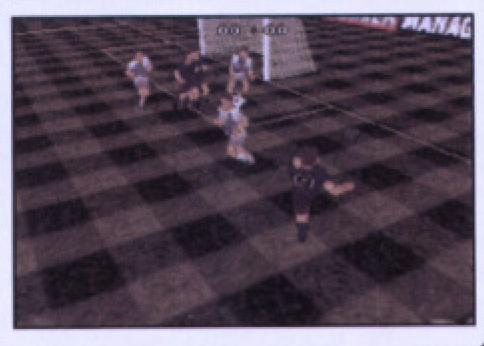
THERE'S ONLY ONE BARRY DAVIES

Euro '96 has benefited from the dulcet tones of Barry Davies. As well as being superior to John 'Fifa' Motson in his commentating, the developers have decided to add lots more to his repertoire of clichés by calling him in to record a whole new batch of speech for the Saturn edition. Apart from the player names and commentary, Bazza now gives you snippets of info before and after the match about the teams playing and the weather conditions, and he also gives a run down of how each of the teams qualified, specifying where they finished in their respective groups, and a brief form guide as well. And, to top it all off, he now has little blurbs for free kicks in dangerous positions. But Mr Davies aided the programming team in more ways than one. For the more obscure teams who qualified, he proved to be a fount of wisdom, by providing all the stats and details for the more obscure players that the developers were having troubling finding. All together now, For he's a jolly good fellow, for he's....

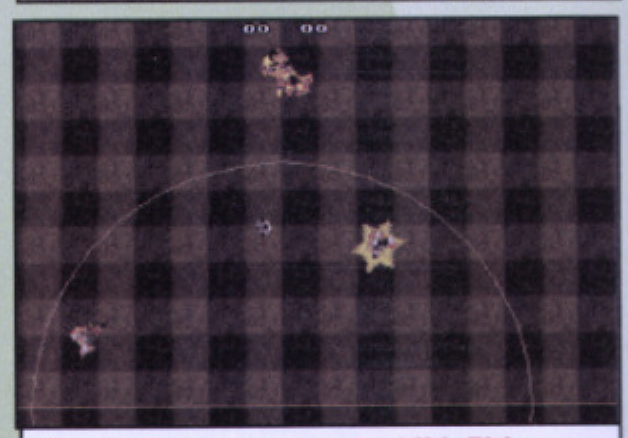




Number 8 felt like Chicken Tonight. Number 10 and the two defenders marking him all decided to make a conga line. Then the Arsenal training session ended.



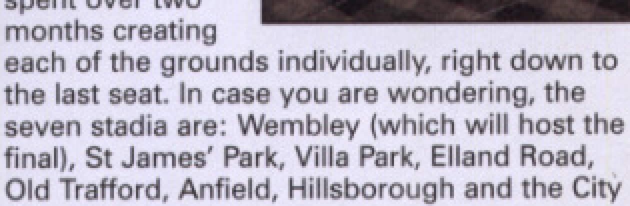




God has blessed you my child. Either that, or Stars in Your Eyes went wrong.



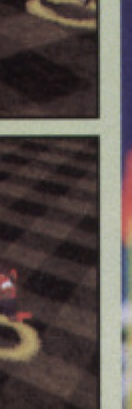
SOME OF THE CROWD ARE ON THE PITCH





The Euro '96 games are scheduled to be played in seven grounds around the country, and due to the official licence (have we mentioned that before?), Sega have been granted permission to use all of the grounds featured. So, a professional model-maker-type guy spent over two months creating each of the grounds individually, right down to the last seat. In case you are wondering, the seven stadia are: Wembley (which will host the final), St James' Park, Villa Park, Elland Road, Old Trafford, Anfield, Hillsborough and the City Ground.

'Our' Steve is the one member of the team who likes standing on cold, wet concrete on a Saturday afternoon, screaming obscenities at 22 eager individuals. When he's an editor, he'll be able to do it from a comfy swivel chair at work. But who better to check out Sega's Euro '96 Soccer?





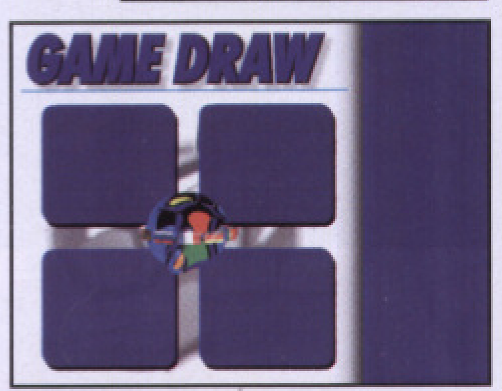


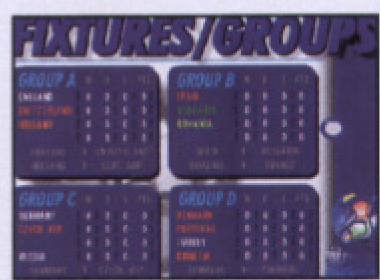


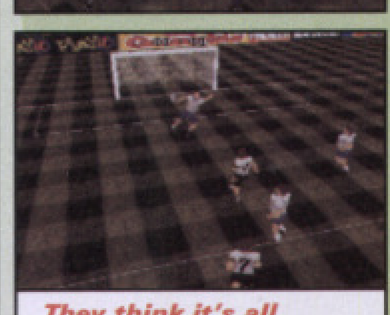
OFFICIALLY, OFFICIAL... OFFICIALLY SPEAKING

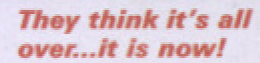
Because this is the official licence of the game, the programmers have gone to town by incorporating all of the possible aspects of the tournament. The countries who will be featuring in the finals (16 teams altogether), are all playable, and when selected in the championship mode, will be in exactly the same groups as their human counterparts in the actual tournament. As a result, you can have a mini Euro '96 tourney in your own home, and then watch the real thing on the telly, gaining double the excitement, for half the price (?). Fantastic.











They think it's all over...it is now!



CHANTS WILL BE A FINE THING

As if all this lot didn't sound realistic enough for you, the developers are working really hard in the sound department to make the game sound like you're at a proper match. Special attention has been paid to the crowd songs – they hope to include at least one song relevant to each team, and in some cases more than that. Obviously, some of the songs heard at matches are a little too 'graphic' to go into a nice family game like this, but expect the constant banging of the drums and Olé jeers from the Spanish, and seats being ripped up, and bottles being thrown onto the pitch by the English. Allegedly.







By this point in the design process, Claire was getting very short-tempered, so she gave me this to caption. Thanks very much.

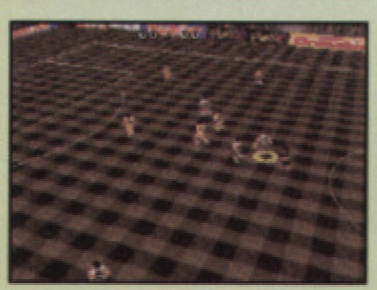


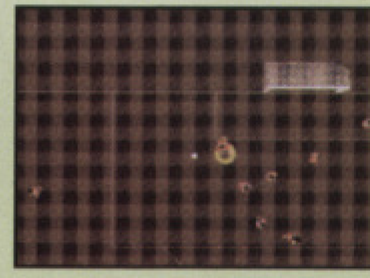




ANYTHING ELSE?

Well, actually there are a couple of other things. For a start, remember Chris Woods, that old England goalie whose career has undergone a turn for the worst? Well, at least he is still playing, albeit in a video game. He's been doing a bit of work on the sly along with a couple of his Premier League teammates. They were filmed doing their best tricks and slapped into the game to give it that extra realism. Also, he gave the programmers some pointers about what he tries to do in a match, to give the characters improved goalkeeper intelligence. So now, if you put all of your shots in the same place, the 'keeper will become aware of this and 'learn' to dive that way.









Spot the ball and win a year's supply of Saturn games, a Saturn, a lifetime subscription to MEAN MACHINES, and a Marcus-style goatee beard. Fantastic.






COMPUTER AND VIDEO GAMES
A CUT ABOVE THE REST!
AND A HACK... AND A SLASH...
Guardian Heroes
ISSUE 172 OUT NOW!





There aren't many things in the world that can boast more sequels than Police Acadamy, and certainly not sequels that get better as they go along, but Streetfighter fits the bill. Ladies and gentlemen – this is the next instalment of the epic saga.

The most surprising thing about this game is that it doesn't seem to have created the kind of buzz and excitement that earlier instalments generated. When the first few arcade machines arrived on the scene, sales of incontinence pants and rubber bedsheets hit the roof as the gamesplaying public went crazy for a bit of Streetfighter. Maybe the market's getting bored with upgrades?

Streetfighter Alpha is, however, more than an upgrade. The whole feel of the game has been completely overhauled, enabling even the most ardent of fighters to gain something new from playing this. The actual game is set after SF 1 but before SF 2, which explains some of the 'newer' characters' selection for the game. The best of the rest are back, and have undergone plastic surgery to beef them up a bit. And of course there are the gratuitous secret characters. Akuma is making his regular appearances in Capcom one-on-one beat 'em ups, and Bison (or Vega in the 'foreign' versions) is playable as well. Dan is the other secret character, but he is a little tougher to find.

As well as the secret characters there are a couple of other hidden games. You may have seen the two onto one fight, where you and a mate can fight Bison as Ryu and Ken. There is also some game info that can be accessed giving you info about, well, the game, unsurprisingly. Whatever your current view of Streetfighter, I guarantee it will change when you play this.

THREE, TWO, ONE, ZERO!

Being as there is the odd new geezer/geezette in the troop, we felt it was necessary to profile each character for your reference. Now, pay attention:

RYU

Of all the characters in the posse, Ryu is the one who has benefited the least from the upgrade. He remains one of the best characters in the game, however. His fireballs and Dragon Punches can all be strung together with standard moves for some devastating combos. He still has his vendetta with Sagat, and he is the final person you must defeat in order to complete the arcade mode. But his reason for entering is that he has heard a rumour of a fighter with abnormal powers (any guesses?). Still guided by his mentor, Sheng Long, he is ideal for players wanting to get hold of the basics once again.





KEN

Although Ken's armoury has been upgraded to include a couple of new standing attacks and he has acquired a new super combo, he remains largely as he was in the last game, Super Streetfighter 2 Turbo. His all round style is a favourite of many players, as he is very easy to pick up and lethal in the hands of a master. In this edition, Ken's sole objective is to seek out Ryu, his teacher, so he can test his skills against his own mentor.









GUY

Cast your minds back a while and you'll remember that Guy was an integral part of the threesome that destroyed the Mad Gears in Final Fight, another awesome Capcom coin-op. Wanting to turn his style of battle into something more formidable, he enters the Alpha tournament. His strongest asset is easily his speed, which is equalled only by Chun Li, and his range of standard moves incorporate quick fire punches and kicks. He can also produce good moves at either ground or airborne levels, so he is definitely a good character to master.

BIRDIE

New fighter: Part 2. This bloke first appeared in Streetfighter One, and is one of five people to re-appear from that game. His previous job was as a bodyguard, but feeling that that particular line of work was taking him nowhere, he enlisted in the tournament to earn some cash, and a bit of recognition. He is principally a sluggish character, with his moves being slow and awkward to perform. With perseverance, however, perfecting combos for this guy can become very useful. His Super moves are really destructive, and sap away much of your energy.



CHUN LI

In keeping with the current fashions, our Chunners has undergone a complete facelift. Say goodbye to incredibly short skirts, and say hello to figure-hugging leggings. The reason for the change of attire can be put down to her change of job – she is now an undercover copper on the trail of Bison's drug racket. She also has a new super combo, and her fireball has been changed so that it doesn't need charging. Also the spinning bird kick that proved so useful in the other games (not!), has been banished by the wayside and replaced with a drill kick, which is much more useful.

ADON

Another original Streetfighter One survivor, resurrected from the dead. Adon also has a vendetta, which is his principal reason for entering the game. He is determined to prove to the world that the arrogant Sagat is all talk and no action. He learnt a similar style of kickboxing to the Thai one, but he relies more on speed, than the power Sagat uses. He has a variant on a Flash Kick move and also a similar attack to the Tiger Knee. His specials really can do some damage, and dazzle with punches and kicks that demolish opponents' energy bars.



SAGAT

Another appearance from Sagat. After his well known fight with Ryu in the original arcade game, in which he obtained the scar across his chest, he still bears grudge against him. He seems to have acquired the most upgrades, with the Tiger Knee now easier to perform, a new pick up/throw move, his fireball is souped up, and his Tiger Uppercut now gaining up to 7 or 8 hits! He also has a new Super Combo, inflicting a barrage of kicks and knees.

ROSE

Old Bison has picked up a few enemies, hasn't he? Rose is another who has entered the tournament primarily to destroy the caped one, though the reasons why aren't quite clear. Of all the characters, she is probably the worst to start off with – even though her moves aren't bad, they take a bit of time to get going meaning that she may feel frustrating to play. Her super combos are pretty good, and her Soul Edge move can reflect back flying projectiles, which can be a useful counter and combo starter.



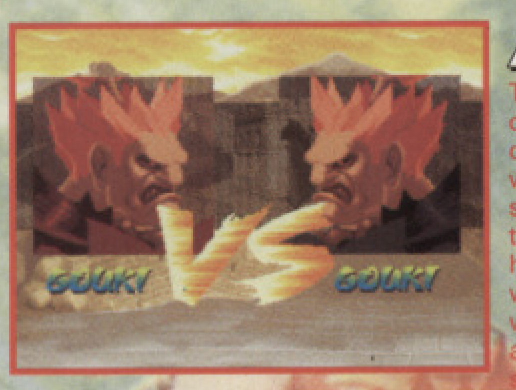
SODOM

The second warrior to appear in this game who also starred in Final Fight was one of the major figures in the Mad Gear clan. He was one of the early boss characters, but for this has exchanged his Samurai Swords for a pair of Sai. In similar fashion to Birdie, he is a slow, bulky fighter, but does possess quite hefty amounts of power. His moves are all executed in the same way as Zangief – 360 degree rotations, but they are devastatingly strong if done in the right places. Rumour has it that he has entered the tournament to gather up possible fighters in an attempt to re-establish the Gears.

CHARLIE

Or Nash, as he is known in the Japanese version, Charlie is Guile's mate who Bison kills, causing Guile to enter the game in Streetfighter 2. Should you have completed SF 2, Guile avenges his death by beating Bison. The alleged reason for Charlie's inclusion to the game is the same as Chun Li's: investigating Bison's drugs connections. If first impressions are anything to go by, his techniques and style of fighting are exactly the same as Guile's, he just sports a nice pair of specs. The flash kick and Sonic boom are the same, meaning fans of the Colonel will be at home with Charlie.





AKUMA

The first of the two secret characters featured here is one tough cookie. If you want to fight him in the story mode, it is a little tricky. In the arcade, you have to finish every ROUND with a Super move, and he will appear. We aren't sure at the moment if that is the same for this home version. However, if you do manage to get him in random mode, he is probably one of the best fighters in the game. He has a stunning range of moves, like ground and air fireballs, a couple of kick moves, and some awesome Super Finishing moves, four in total, one of which drains over half of the opponent's energy, inflicting 15 hits!

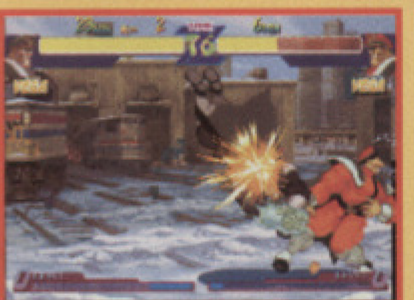


BISON

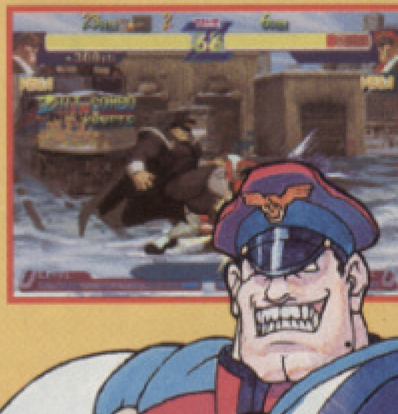
Although he is also selectable from the random box by getting lucky (incidentally, once Bison or Akuma has been accessed from Random, to re-access him, go to the box and keep pressing down), he can only be fought against by selecting the right characters, who may be after him in the Arcade mode. He has undergone a couple of changes, with the Psycho Crusher now only a Super Finish move. In its place, he has got a new fireball attack. His Supers are pretty awesome, and burn up energy like anything.



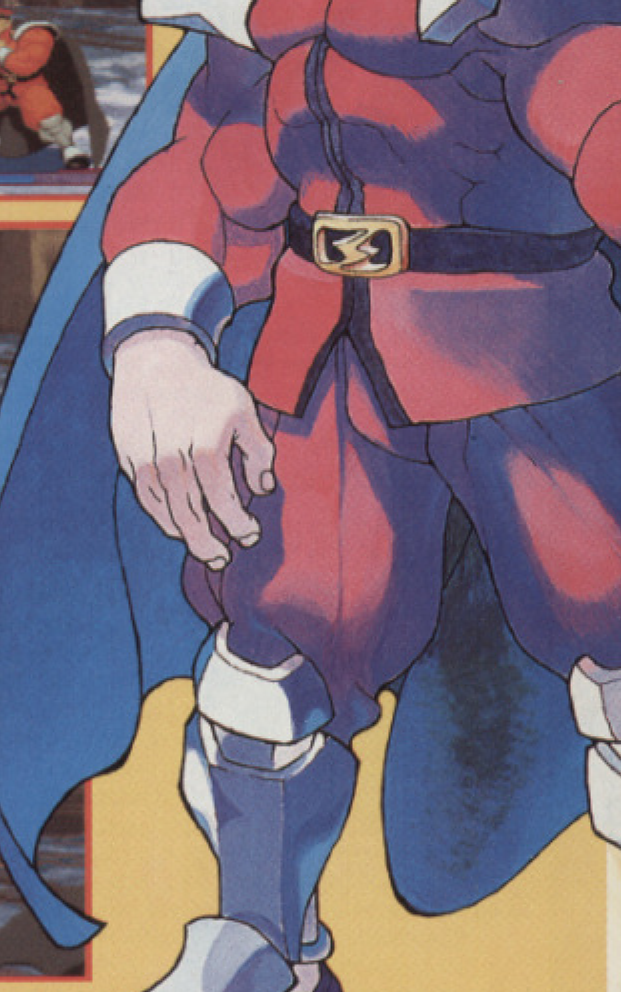






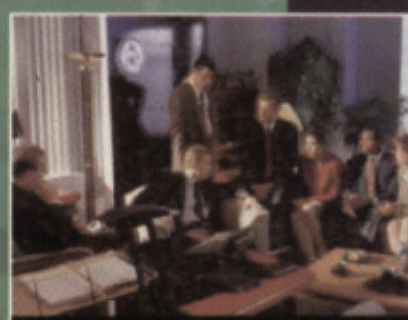








One of the industry's oldest software houses, Activision (they were the first third party company to produce games for Atari back in 1979), is hoping to make its mark in the problematic field of 'interactive movie' RPGs with a costly new venture.





Spycraft – The Great Game (a title surely not intended to be as presumptuous as it initially sounds) is set in the world of post Cold War espionage. You have the most up to date facilities the modern CIA can offer to help you discover the identity of the assassin behind the murder of a Russian presidential candidate. It's up to you to track down the killer before he strikes his next victim – the President of the USA. On the way, the dismantling of Russia's nuclear arsenal will cause problems and the Moscow mafia will rear their ugly heads...

The game is knitted together with over an hour of footage shot on 35mm film by director Ken Berris. The film sequences take the action from the CIA in New York to London, Tunis, Heidelberg and the KGB in Moscow. The footage also incorporates 400 stills and stock CIA footage. The screenplay and storyline for the game were written by James Adams, Washington Bureau Chief for The Sunday Times.

All the above, spread over two year production life, contributed to an overall budget of $2.5 million – Activision's expectations of the game are understandably running high.

Initial versions of Spycraft will appear on PC CD-ROM and come on a hefty three discs. Saturn owners can expect a streamlined version of the game (the Internet option, for example, is unlikely to be included) later this year. In the meantime, many of the elements common to both versions are already in place...

A VIEW TO A KILL



You play Spycraft by acting as a CIA operative – you lead special forces, track foes through computer databases, manipulate and study satellite photos and intercept radio frequencies to get the information you need. Two of the key tools you can employ are KAT and Mix and Match...

Spycraft's graphics push the Saturn to the limit. Just kidding.

KAT



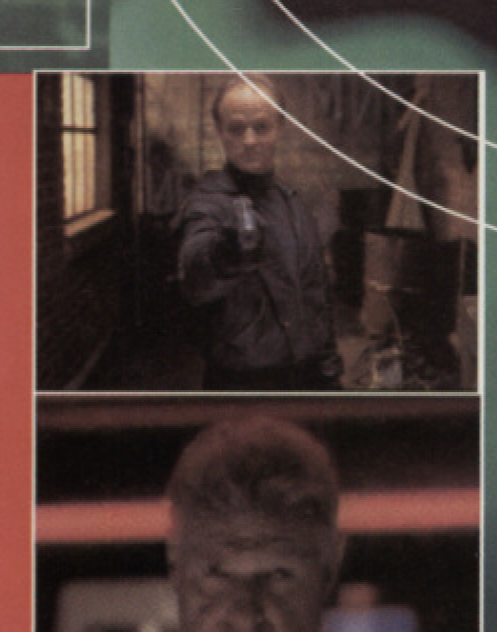
The Kennedy Assassination Tool is so named because it provides a computer analysis of a bullet's trajectory, thus helping you pinpoint its origin – the same procedure employed following the murder of JFK. In Spycraft, you use KAT to locate the assassin of a Russian presidential candidate in Red Square.

MIX AND MATCH



Once the bullet's origin has been traced, you can photofit the assassin's face using 3-D composite imaging.

Once you've got a face you're happy with, you can search the Intelink databases for possible identification.



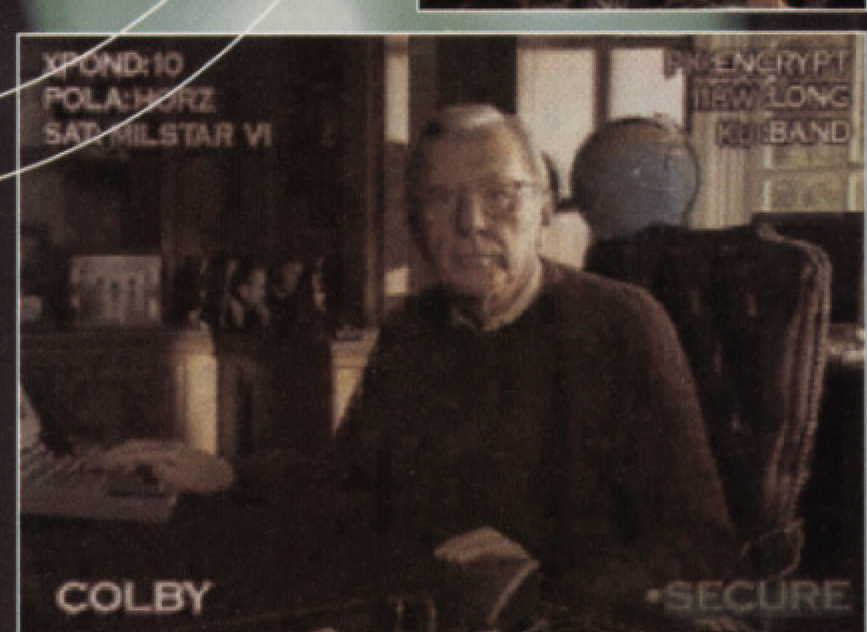




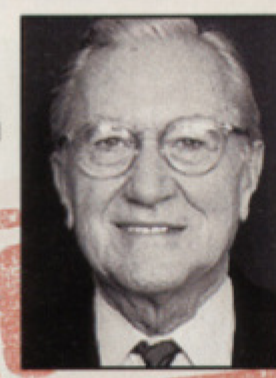
SPYCRAFT

THE GREAT GAME

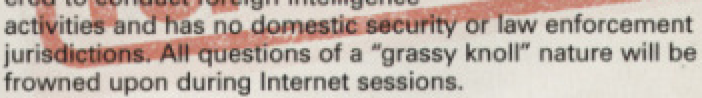




WILLIAM COLBY



Activision recruited William Colby, director of the CIA between 1973 and 1976, as a storyline advisor to Spycraft. Colby himself also appears in the game, and has agreed to offer advice to players on the Internet at designated times. The Central Intelligence Agency was established by President Harry Truman in 1947. Under its charter, the CIA is empowered to conduct foreign intelligence activities and has no domestic security or law enforcement jurisdictions. All questions of a "grassy knoll" nature will be frowned upon during Internet sessions.



OLEG KALUGIN

The other major advisor on Spycraft was former KGB major general Oleg Kalugin. Kalugin has been based in the US for the past twenty years, the initial twelve of which he spent overseeing counter-intelligence operations for the KGB. During this time he personally handled the defection of Edward Lee Howard before defecting himself, with William Colby's help. Kalugin provided advice about KGB operating methods for the game – his key areas of expertise include economic and security concerns as they affect Western investments in Russia and private sector consultancy. Internet users can also 'meet' Kalugin during scheduled conference times.

BRIAN LAR



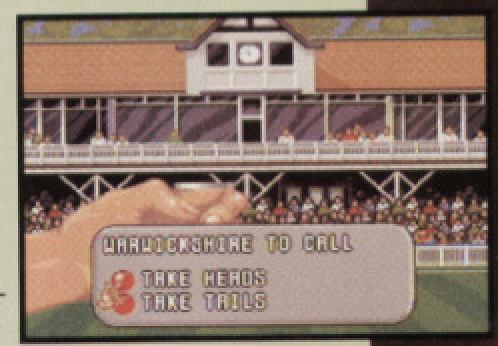
He's the man English cricketers love to hate. Every time England play against him he usually rattles up a whopping score as we get crushed yet again. He holds the World Test Cricket record for runs scored – a mammoth 375 against England. And he holds the English County Cricket record for the most runs scored, a whopping 501 not out. So is there any better man to base a cricket game on? We think not.

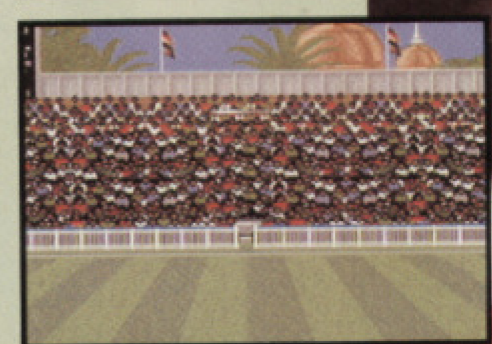
The original Brian Lara Cricket was one of the biggest Megadrive games of 1995. During last summer it spent 10 weeks at the top of Gallup's video game chart and from July to September was the best selling game on any format. Now imagine the difficulty in Codemasters' task in trying to improve on that. Do I sense that this message will self destruct in five seconds?

Well, for a start they actually listened to you lot: the people who bought the game. They picked out a hundred punters who returned the mini questionnaire cards that appeared in the box to get their views on how to improve on the formula. They took all of their ideas into consideration, and the ones that cropped up the most were deemed worthy of putting in the upgrade.

One thing that Codies want to stress is that this is a whole new game, incorporating many more aspects of cricket than just international matches. County cricket, World Cup cricket, international tests and historic matches have all been added to give the game improved lastability. And for all the cricket novices there is a chance to nip down to the practice nets to brush up your skills.







DOWN TO THE NETS

One of the many new features to be incorporated in this version are the practice nets. If you decide to have a bash at your batting, you can select which type of bowler you want to face, thus helping you to become accustomed to the various swingers and spinners who may be your opponents. You can also make a copy bowl, where you decide on power, pace and placement – the computer will then keep on bowling that same delivery until you decide otherwise. And bowling will er, let you bowl, surprisingly.

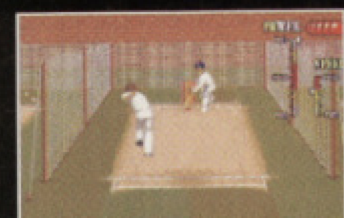






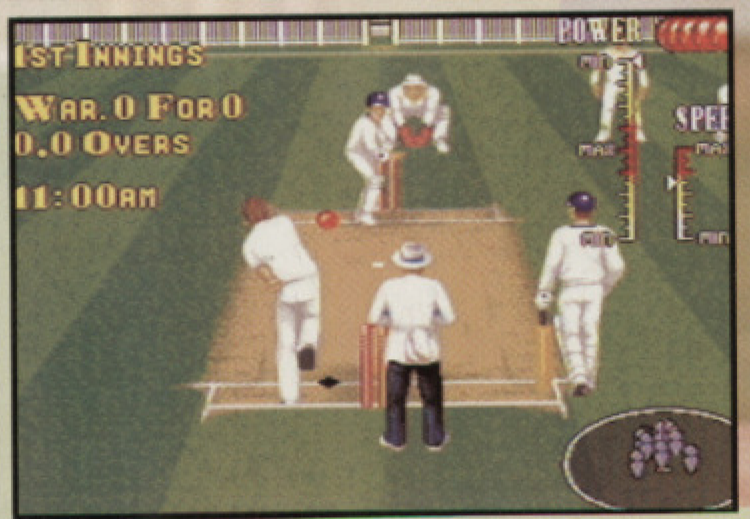


You've heard of road rage – this is cricket rage. Select Aggressive to beat them with the bat.



As the bouncy apple rolls towards the sponge fingers, the batsman waves his twig.





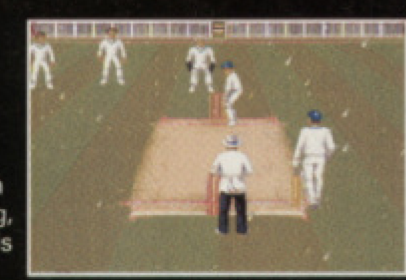


RA CRICKET

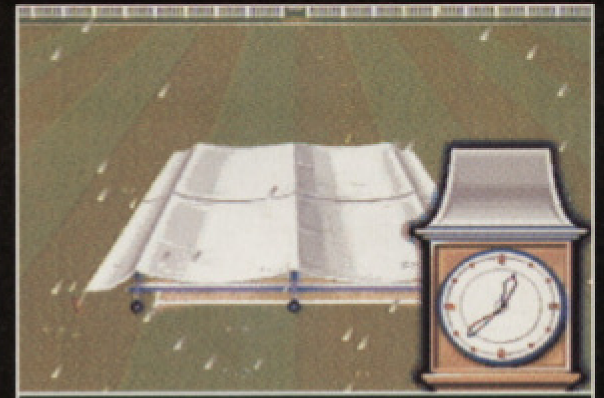




RAIN STOPPED PLAY



A new feature of this version is the 'rain stopped play' element. When you are playing, if the weather is looking a bit dodgy the heavens may open, leading the match to be temporarily abandoned. The rain will start off slowly and then, when the heavy stuff arrives, the covers will come out and a clock will pop up showing you how long the game is being stopped for.



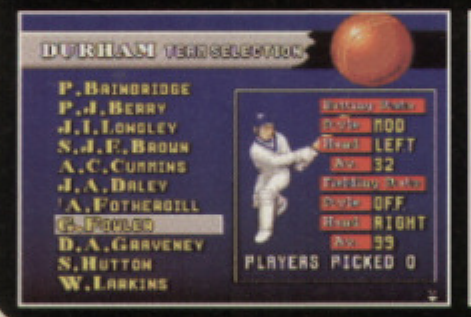
On the third drop, the weather will be pissing down, and the pitch soaked.





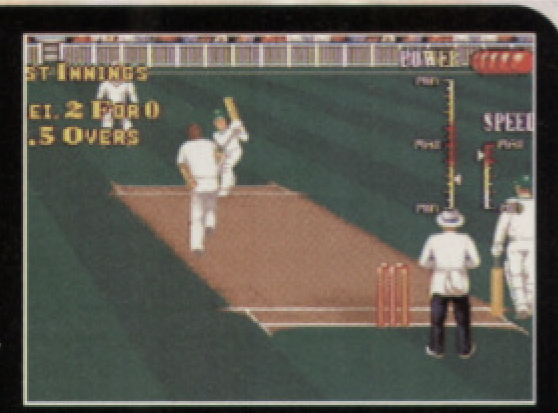
YOU CAN COUNTY ON ME

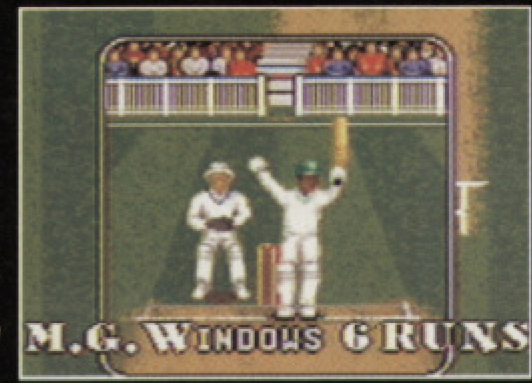
Out of the hundred people who gave their views on how to improve the game, about 80% of them said they wanted to see county cricket included. Codemasters agreed and got to it. All of the 18 teams that play in the championship are available for selection with the player rosters and statistics all up to date from the end of last season. The only style of game to play here is a one day competition, with a limited amount of overs that you can alter at the start. The action is pretty dramatic as far as cricket games go, with the batsmen concentrating much more on attacking strokes and getting more runs than keeping themselves in for long periods of time. Which means that from the bowling point of view, the only main objective is to keep the run rate low, and burn up the overs as quick as possible.

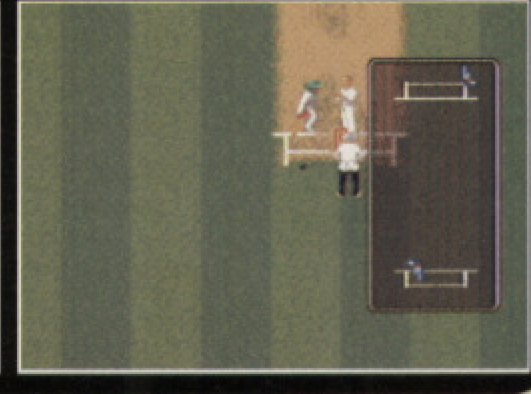


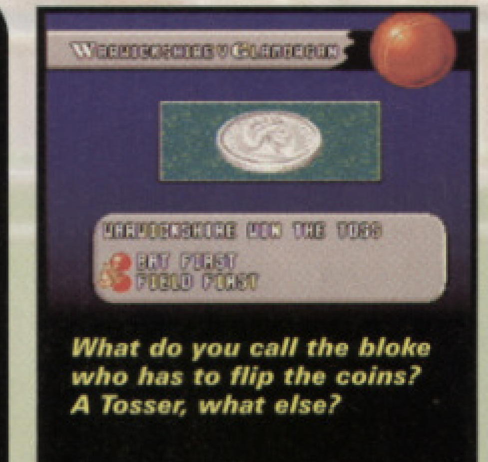
ALL CHANGE PLEASE

As well as the standard changes made to the game styles, there have been a number of smaller, but just as effective, alterations. For a start there is more than just one pavilion in front of which the coin toss takes place, and the grounds and pitches you can play on have also been upgraded. Different pitch styles are represented by different graphical touches – a dark pitch signifying a hard surface that gets slippery after rain, and a light coloured playing surface signifying a hard and very dry area. The bounce of the ball and the bowling style you should use should change to accompany the conditions. The fielders have also been improved, with slip catches, behind catches and dives now the order of the day.









What do you call the bloke who has to flip the coins? A Tosser, what else?



Gus Swan is the opening batsmen in a bid to bring England that Och Aye the Noo, never say die attitude.

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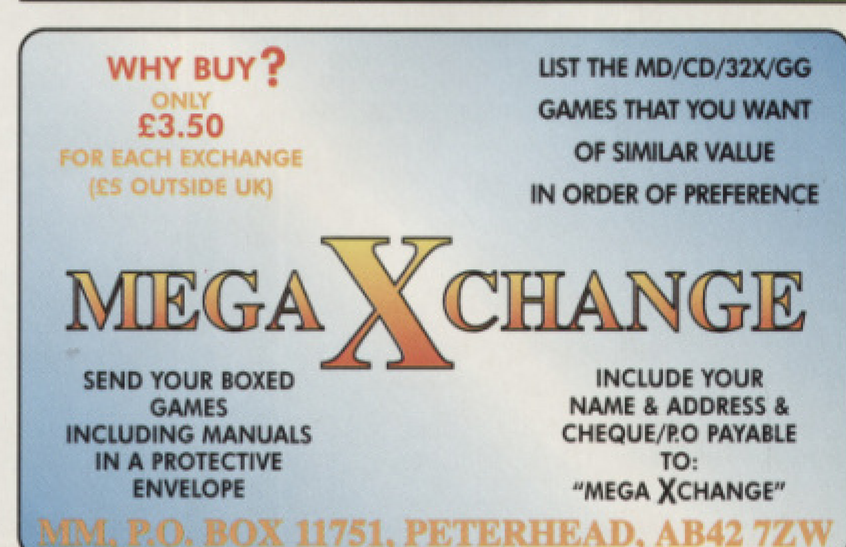
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Valora Valley Golf



Golf has been described as many thing down the ages, such distinguished commentators as Mark Twain and Bruce Forsyth waxing lyrical on this most leisurely sport. One thing golf has definitely never been described as is "a funny old game." There are, for example, no steaming lava lakes threatening the destruction of a poorly aimed ball. There are no isolated tarmac islands occupying the canals between you and the hole. And there are most definitely no dead dinosaurs to ruin your "good walk."

This is where Valora Valley Golf promises to redress the balance. Best described as 'Crazier Golf', this features a number of bizarre grassy skateboard parks doubling as a golf course in this new take on Sega's Pebble Beach Golf. Knock your ball up landscapes structured like wedding cakes, negotiate it across a series of tiny islands to each the mainland, and dribble through a collection of Greek columns that turn the great game of golf into a frustrating game of pinball. These holes look like hell, and are damned difficulty to play. No wonder they call it the Devil's Open...



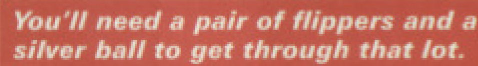




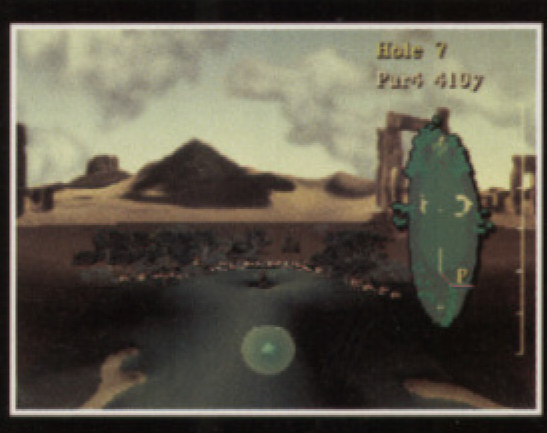
FLAME ON

One feature you definitely won't find elsewhere is the option extending the opportunity to imbue your ball with, er, magic powers. When the options Fire, Psycho, Cyclone and Warp appear alongside your swingmeter, simply halt your swing by the intended power-up and watch the fireworks. Track your ball is it zooms over the terrain.

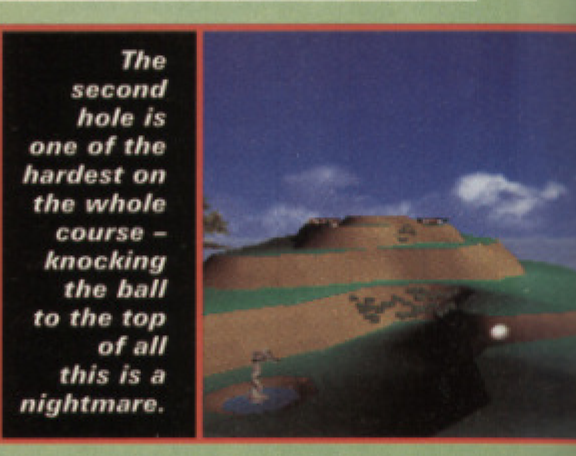



You'll need a pair of flippers and a silver ball to get through that lot.



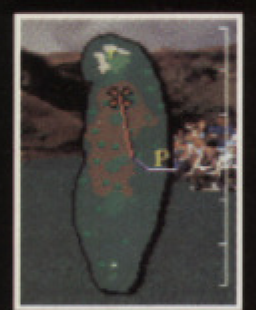





The second hole is one of the hardest on the whole course – knocking the ball to the top of all this is a nightmare.

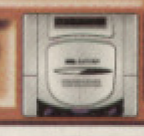
CLUB CLASS

All the sophisticated mod cons you'd expect from Saturn golf are present and correct, with all the information you need to select the right club, time the right swing, and make a right cock up all presented in pretty diagrams.

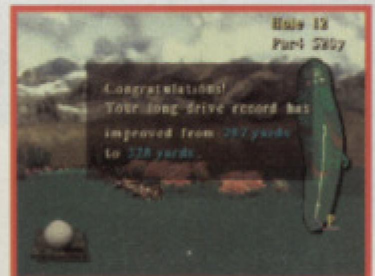












FLIPPER FUN

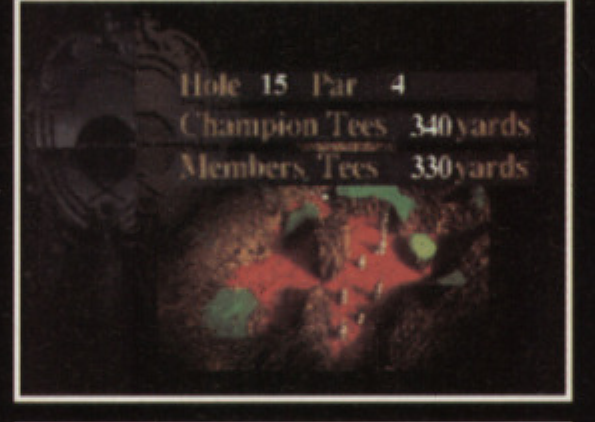
Some of the most hellish courses in the Devil's Open are more like grassy pinball tables. Traditional golf goes out the window when you deliberately aim the ball towards cliff faces, hoping it will ricochet into more useful positions on the green. Some of the game's stickier nooks and crannies need some careful negotiation.







Thankfully, you're not required to tee off from these floating grassy knolls.







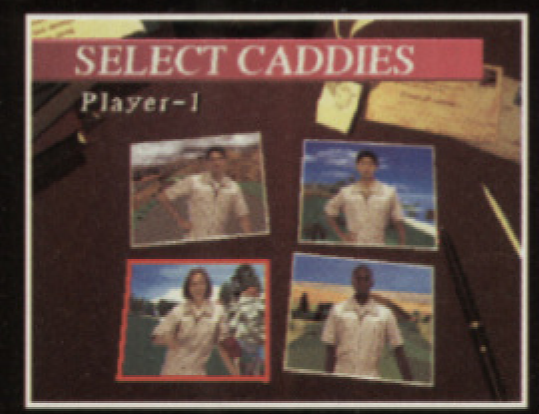


HAVE A NICE DAY

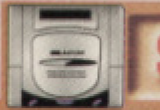
Once you've selected your player you can choose your caddie as well. These cheesy Americans will pop up in the corner of the screen, patronisingly offering you encouragement if you've done well.













BY BMG

GAME TYPE PLATFORM



1 PLAYERS

PRICE TBA

RELEASE APRIL '96

COMPLETE



GEX

Another publisher steps forward to risk a slapping-down in the mysterious Saturn-platform game affair. Why have the Saturn's few platform games been of generally poor quality and received a hostile reaction, honourable exceptions of Bug! and Rayman (in our estimation) apart?

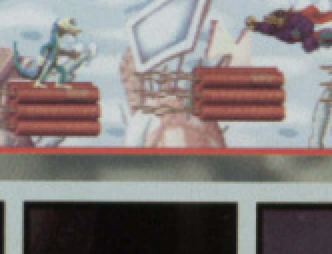
BMG's American mainstay, Crystal Dynamics, throw their hat into the ring with Gex, the everyday platform story of a TV-fixated reptile, a 'lounge lizard' if you will. It's nothing less than the fourth Crystal Dynamics title to be ported from 3DO to the Saturn, and the changes in appearance and game structure are negligible.

Gex is set across numerous stages within themed worlds, linked by a TV plot device. Apparently, these worlds are parodies of televisual clichés, with spoof renditions of graveyard, jungle and 'toon settings for starters. These are enjoined by remote controls hidden within the level, which will turn on other screens in the section between stages. It's all spookily reminiscent of Garfield: Caught in the Act, a lacklustre Megadrive title of last year, but of course, Gex has been around longer in 3DO form. And as 99.9% of the world's population do not have that hardware platform, it's time to bring Gex to a wider audience.



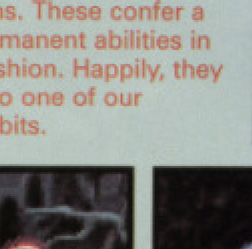
LICKETY-SPLIT

Gex's salamander-esque qualities can be enhanced by lapping up the globular items dotted around the locations. These confer a range of temporary or permanent abilities in true platform power-up fashion. Happily, they also give us a chance to do one of our favourite 'icons 'n' boxes' bits.









SPEED



FIRE SPITTING

ICE SPITTING



ZAPPER BREATH

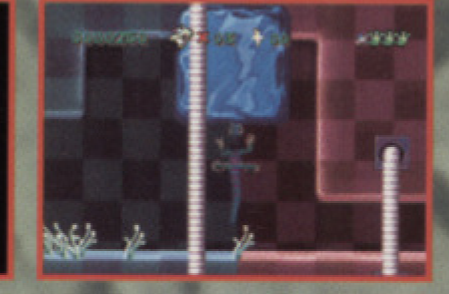
INVINCIBILITY

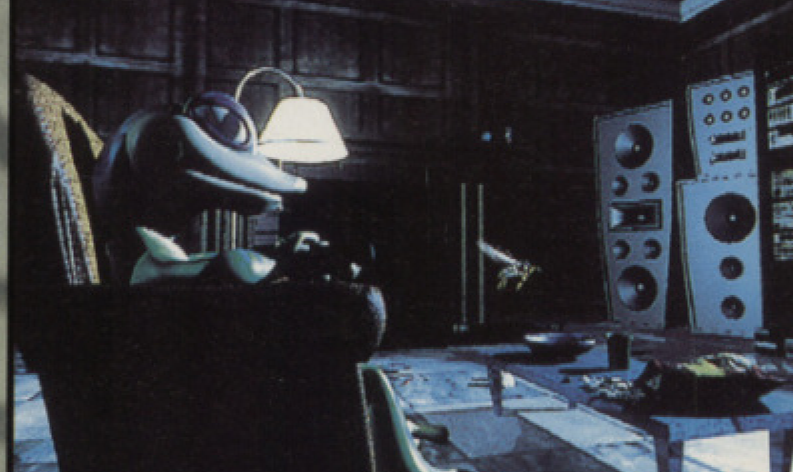


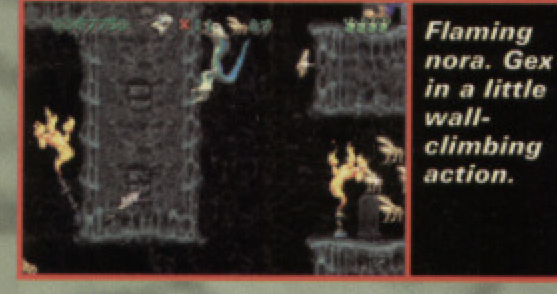
He's not going to impress with his onion breath.



Come on baby. Light my fire.

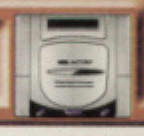






Flaming nora. Gex in a little wall-climbing action.







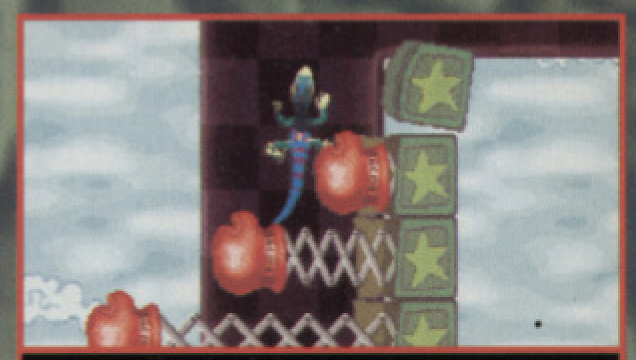




MOTORMOUTH

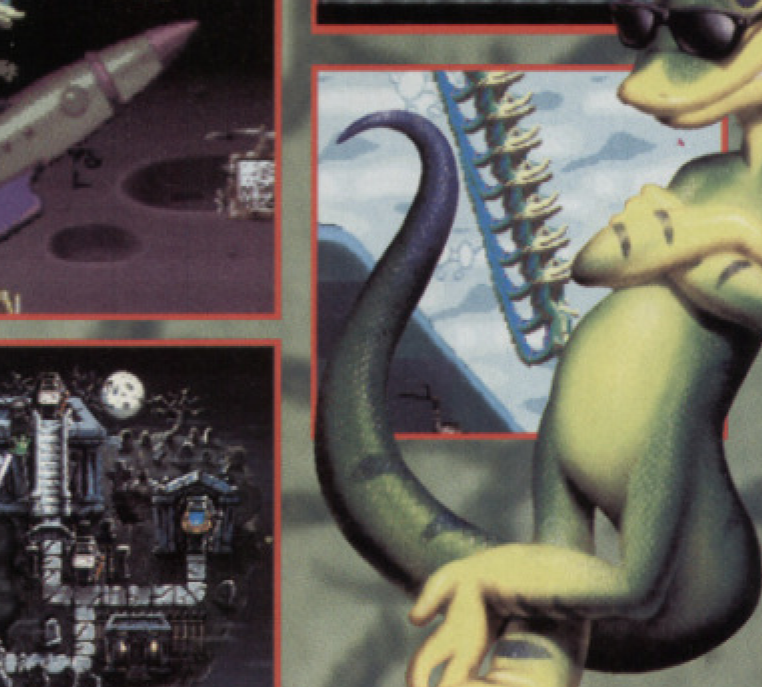
Humour is an oh-so dangerous concept to incorporate in games. For every French and Saunders out there, there's a Hale and Pace. Nevertheless, Gex is determined to amuse, predominantly through the 'quickfire' quips of Dana Gould, a nobody here, but apparently a big TV comedian in the U.S. There's a remarkable amount of sampled speech, and so far we've spotted parodies of Poltergeist and Rocky. A more developed version of the effect used by Sega in Bug!





It's just one giggle after another, innit?



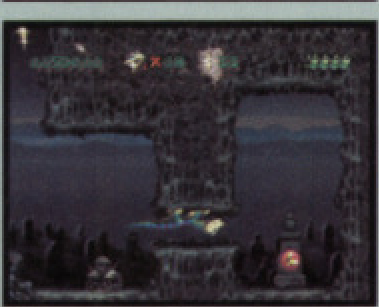


STICKY MOMENTS

As well as jumping to platforms, Gex is quite happy jumping onto walls and ceilings and running along them. As the game progresses, this technique is used extensively to pass through narrow gaps and dangerous areas. Gex also has a pseudo-three dimensional structure to some of its levels by allowing you to climb onto walls which are effectively in the background. Gex is viewed from overhead, as he walks freely across these surfaces. It's confusing in concept, but easy to grasp in practice, although the levels become a complex mixture of two separate 2-D planes of action.









STEVE'S TIPS

After the last full moon I finally shed the assumed persona that was Steve Key. My transformation is now complete – I am the Tips Bat, the controller of the tipping power stored in Steve's head. Freed of my camouflage, I can concentrate on bringing you only the best tips from my lofty view of the Sega world.

Trying to play my Saturn while hanging from the ceiling is proving a little difficult, and all the droppings in the world won't hold the damn thing in place: I've already got through five of the things. Anyway, the other day I rushed out to by my copy of Sega Rally, but forgot that I couldn't see anything in daylight and crashed straight into shop window display. Doh! Address all your cheats to: THE TIPS BAT, TIPS DEPARTMENT, MEAN MACHINES SEGA, PRIORY COURT, 30-32 FARRINGDON LANE, LONDON, EC1R 3AU.



SEGA RALLY

CHEATS GALORE

Following on from last month's snippet that revealed the Mirror Mode, we now present a veritable Sega Rally tips fest. Coming up, we have the cheats to get you to the Lakeside course, play as the Lancia Stratos, access Mirror Mode (just in case you missed it before), get the Hyper Car, race AM3's top honcho and zoom in during replays.

To play as the Stratos, on the mode select screen (Arcade, Time Attack etc.), press X, Y, Z, Y, X, then press C to enter your desired mode.

Hold X and Y, and enter the Time Attack, or Practice Mode, to get the chance to play on the Lakeside course.

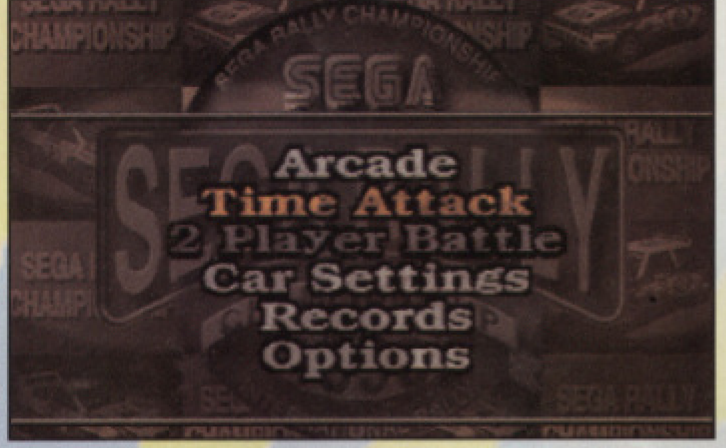
For a Hyper Car, hold X on the car selection screen, and press C to select the car of your choice. When you start, the Hyper Mode should be enabled.

For Mirror Mode, simply hold Y and select the course you require on the course select screen.

To race the top programmer from AM3, simply select time attack, and when you get to the 3 laps/free run selection, press X, Z and C together whilst 3 laps is highlighted.

And finally, to change the view on the replays, hold DOWN and button Z, whilst watching them, then use L and R to zoom in and out.

You can thank Steven Quigley for ripping all these off from Saturn Mag and sending them into us.









VIRTUA COP

RANKING MODE, GUN SELECT



Get to this logo, and press U, D, L, and R whilst holding C to show ranking mode.



And the second option screen. Gun select can give you infinite bullets.

Cop looks like it will deservedly remain a favourite with a lot of people for some time to come. To spice up the game a bit for all the complete dunces who have failed to get anywhere, here is the way to get Ranking Mode, and an extra options screen with Mirror Mode and book keeping options. All you have to do is hold down C whilst pressing UP, DOWN, LEFT, and RIGHT on the Sega logo just before the demo of the game starts. You can thank N. Holden from Clayton in Manchester for sending us that one. And for this fantastic piece of info, we have our very own Edwin Lomas to thank, as he provided us with the gun select cheat. Firstly the Ranking Mode must be accessed, and the following code must be entered on the same screen as before. Hold C and press DOWN, UP, RIGHT, LEFT, UP, UP, LEFT, RIGHT. You should hear a gun shot. Now start the game as usual, pause, then press Reload to cycle through the available weapons.







FIFA '96

SHADOWS

So it's not exactly the best cheat in the world, but it's better than nothing. To change the length of the players shadows, go to the instant replay option during a game and then hold the R button and move the D-pad to change the length and the angle. Useless, I know, but for some of you may find this absolutely vital. Maybe.





TOHSHINDEN

BIG HEADS, SECRET CHARACTERS

Another completely useless but fun cheat for Tohshinden. Whilst you are on the mode select screen, hold down the L and R buttons before selecting your playing style. Now choose your desired fighter and then start the game to give all the fighters massive heads. Also, there are three secret characters to be accessed. Gaia and Sho can be put onto the player select screen by pressing UP, DOWN, UP, DOWN, RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT on the title screen. You should hear a noise to indicate it has worked. To get the third secret character, Cupido, who is incidentally only available in the Saturn version, highlight Sho when picking a fighter, hold UP and press any button to select her.













SATURN

NBA JAM: TOURNAMENT EDITION

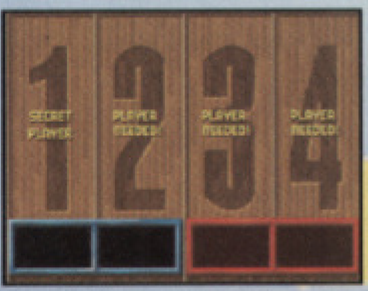
SECRET CHARACTERS

Prepare yourself for a tips marathon, as we bring you the entire cast of secret characters from the stunning Saturn basketball game. You can thank the Ed Lomas tips bandwagon for coming up with this little lot. To access them, you must say 'Yes' when asked if you want enter you initials, then hold the L and R buttons whilst inputting these initials and dates. 'Secret Player' will appear on the screen to let you know it has worked.

NAME:	INITIALS	DATE
Prince Charles	CHA	May 4
Bill Clinton	BIL	Jun 3
Hilary Clinton	HIL	Nov 6
Mike D	M_D	Jul 1
Adrock	ADR	Apr 6
MCA	MCA	Apr 9
Heavy D	HEA	Jan 9
Fresh Prince	FRS	Feb 2
Jazzy Jeff	JAZ	Oct 9
Benny	BEN	Sept 20
Blaze	BLZ	Jan 14
Hugo	HOR	Jun 12
Bird	LAR	Jan 15
Gorilla	APE	Apr 2
Crunch	WOL	Mar 7
Catling	CAT	Jan 2
Hutchinson	BAR	Apr 9
Magic Hair	STH	Dec 8
D Falcus	DAZ	Aug 6
Hodgeson	HOG	Dec 31
Tunnicliff	SAT	May 7
J Falcus	JAS	Nov 16
Jax	JAX	Mar 1
Mad Mike	MUS	Dec 24
McHugh	BAA	Jul 12
Gray	ROB	Feb 23
Higgins	TOM	Feb 19
Hill	ZIG	Apr 7
J Moon	JAY	Aug 24
Chow Chow	CHD	May 5
Brutah	GOW	Jul 17
Weasel	DAN	Jan 2
Snake	SNK	Jun 15
Renaldo	REN	Feb 4
Fumungus	GUN	Jan 11
Kabuki	KUB	Apr 14
Max	LIZ	Aug 7
Sequoia	SAW	Apr 10
Boo - Boo	THI	Nov 1
Pistol	WAN	Jun 10
Facime	DEL	Oct 19
Air Dog	AIR	Jan 21
Carlton	CAL	Mar 25
Divita	DIV	Jul 3
Goskie	GOS	Jan 6
Liptak	LIP	Jan 14
Rivett	REV	Jul 6
Turmell	TUR	Jan 31
Thomas	FNK	Jan 8
Gordon	GOR	Jul 3
Shelley	SHY	Jun 8
Moore	MOE	Jun 8

There are a couple of other names that let you play the game, with only one match to win and with all the matches completed.

All 27 teams defeated	FIN	Jan 1
26 of 27 defeated	END	Jan 1









OFF WORLD INTERCEPTOR

PASSWORDS

Quite why David Waddington bothered to buy this is a mystery to me, but he did and has come up with the level codes for any other desperate people who might be stuck on this. I also have a little tip for anyone else who is interested: Don't bother buying it. It's pants.
Anyway, here are those codes:
Level 2: HD6S?KBIKL5KHRBM
Level 3: WPNS44943LXKMWGM
Level 4: HPWSPFH77L2KRWVL
Level 5: 3MSCWFY?TSTWZYSP
Level 6: 8V!DM8F78HZJHSPL (this is for the Morphus Moors, the hidden track)

SATURN

DISPLAY TIME

Bizarre 'tip' of the month comes from Gareth Calvert, who sent in this little cheat. To display the time and date on the Saturn, open the drive door, highlight the play/pause globe and hold B and press Start. This will bring up the time and date. Fine work Gareth – I bet ypu're proud of that one.



MEGADRIVE

FIFA '96

IMPROVE TEAM



Andy East from West Yorkshire, opened his North and South to give us a snippet of tipping goodness about the number one Christmas game on the Megadrive. He reckons that it's really easy to improve the status of your team by doing the following.
At the start, select the options screen and then go to Transfer News. Go to any of the best teams in the world (e.g. Milan, Ajax, Barcelona) and swap their players for your reserves. Now go and swap the team members you don't want with your new and improved reserves to get a much better team.







MEGA-CD

SHINING FORCE CD

MULTIPLE CHEATS

Davie Hay from Portlenockie appears to have shed bucketfuls of sweat and tears to come up with the following cheats for Shining Force on the Mega CD. Take a peek at some of these. To control the enemies in the first two games, restart a saved game, and then as the girl is about to say 'great' press and hold Start, A and C. The option should appear before you start the game. To name your characters, start a new game, name yourself, but DON'T press end, only highlight it. Now simultaneously press A and Start.
Secret Characters:Towards the Root of Evil.
Domingo: You'll find Domingo straight after Gyan the BRSK has joined. During the battle that takes place where your party camps out, he is by the pool of water that some enemies are standing on. Search around here to find him.
Amigo: He is found at the Geppel battle. Before even entering the castle walls, search the third bush (the last one) to your right and you'll find an excellent healer.
Secret Characters:The Evil God awakes.
Higins: He can be found at Solo's battle. As you start the battle send one person to check the wall, directly in front of your party's starting position. Then you'll be asked to find him again – he'll be at the very top of the screen, almost straight above the point where you started.







After last month's scintillating guide, the X-Men return for the umpteenth time, as we bring you the final two characters not featured last month and two of the secret characters, Akuma and Juggernaut. At the time of writing, we don't yet know the cheat to be Magneto, but someone will hopefully enlighten us soon. As soon as we find out, you'll be the first to know. Anyway, on with the tipping and, as with last month, we have a couple of basic combos to start you off and the X moves for each of the characters. First up is Spiral...

SPIRAL



The multi-limbed character has tricky moves to pull off but they compensate by being varied and quite powerful. She is, however, a bit slow, and often leaves herself susceptible to long range attacks.

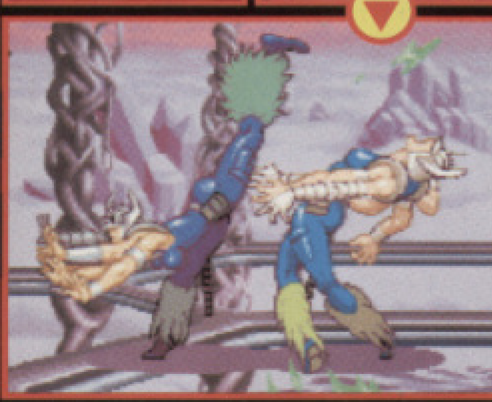
X-MOVES

Level 2: (↓↘→ + ANY PUNCH) Teleport
Level 2: (↓↘→ + HARD KICK) Go invisible
Level 2: (↓↘→ + K) Power ups
Level 3: (↓↙← + PPP) Character change attack.

COMBOS

1: Standing weak kick, weak punch, followed by standing medium kick. Then hard kick them on the way down.



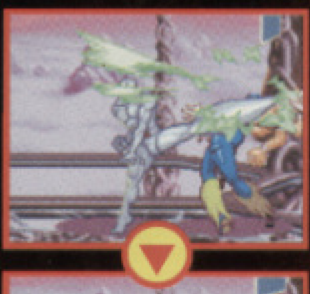


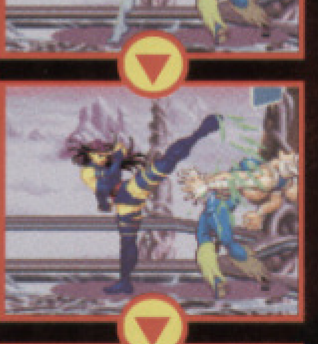
2: Call up the swords and then do a standing hard punch, and then throw the swords at the opponent. Do another standing hard punch for the final hits.

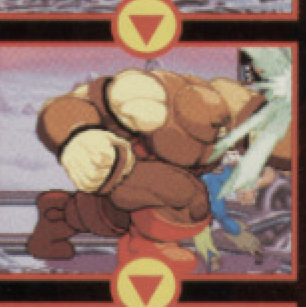




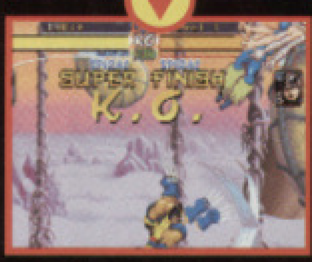
X COMBO











Strictly speaking, it will be impossible to do an X combo for her, but the X move is a 19 hit multi change whopper of a move in its own right, so have a little look at it in action.

COLOSSUS

His lack of good moves make him one of the weaker characters in the game, but his strength is an asset, and can make powerful combos and attacks easy. If you do decide to play as him he will take some time to perfect, so be patient.

X-MOVES

Level 2: (↓↘→ + PPP) Charge Up.
Level 3: (↓↙← + PPP) Torpedo Dive.

COMBOS

1: Start with a jumping Hard Punch into a crouching weak punch, and straight away do the 360 degree spin move with low punch.







X COMBO

Do a jumping hard punch, followed by a crouching weak punch into the 360 attack. Quickly perform the Torpedo move to hit the enemy when they are down.







2: Do a jumping hard punch followed by a standing medium kick and a crouching weak punch. Now do the 360 degrees attack, and when the opponent lands do the shoulder charge to hit them again.







X-MEN CHILDREN OF THE ATOM PLAYERS GUIDE PART 2

JUGGERNAUT

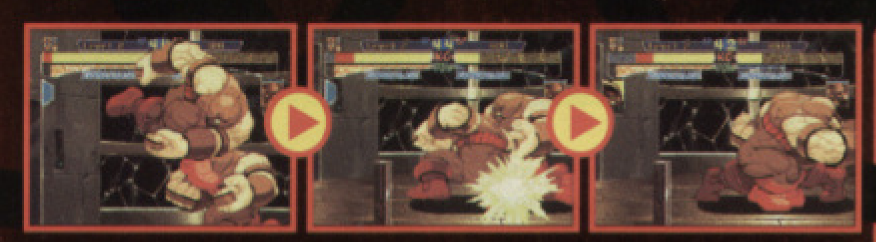
The first of the two secret characters this month and, if truth be known, he isn't much use unless you're trying to impress a few mates. Getting him in the first place will take a bit of time. Firstly one or both of the players in versus mode has to select Akuma by doing the cheats we printed in last month's tips. Then when both have him, go to the character select screen after a fight of two Akumas, and the face boxes should both be empty. Now press Up-Left on the pad, and Wolverine will be selected. Press Up-Left again and Juggernaut's face will appear. Press any button now to select him.

X MOVES

Level 2: (↓↙←↓↙← + P) Charge Up.
Level 3: (←↙↓↘→ + PPP) Shoulder Charge.
Any Level: (↓↙←↓↙← + WEAK PUNCH) Pick up poles. Stand directly in front of the pole to do this.

COMBOS

1. Start with a jumping medium kick, followed by a crouching High Kick, and then straight into the double fist (fireball motion and punch).



2. Start with a crouching medium punch, and then do a crouching high kick, and follow it up with a crouching high punch uppercut.



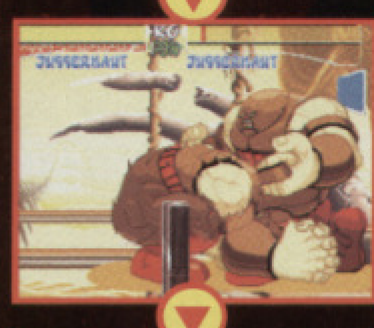




X COMBO

X COMBO: Start with a standing medium punch, and then follow it up with a crouching medium punch whilst performing the X move motions. Then hit the punch buttons to finish the combo.







AKUMA

BOXTEXT:We printed the explanations of how to be Akuma in last month's issue, so by now you should be fairly good with him. Here are a couple of good combos to help you along the way. Akuma is probably the best all round character in the game, and has lots of different moves to string together. Once found, he is definitely worth playing as.

X-MOVES

Level 2: (↓↙← + HARD PUNCH) Charge up.
Level 3: (↓↘→↓↘→ + HARD PUNCH) Super Fireball
Level 3: (→↓↘→↓↘ + HARD PUNCH) Super Dragon Punch

COMBOS

1:Start with a jumping hard punch, into a crouching medium, followed by a hard punch fireball.



2: Crouching weak kick, followed by a crouching medium kick. Now do a standing hard punch followed by a Hard Punch Dragon Punch.









X COMBO

Jump in with a Hard Kick, and land and do a weak crouching punch. Now do the movements for the Super Fireball move, and unleash it for a mega combo.



Virtua Fighter Guide Part

In a chart happening about as unpredictable as 'crap-record-goes-to-Christmas-No.1', Virtua Fighter 2 debuted at the top of both the Saturn and all CD chart. Mike Stock must be working at Sega UK's marketing department. Anyway, our guide continues with a closer look at two of the more intriguing remaining characters; Kage Maru and Jeffry, who represents the throwing contigency. The others are covered in less detail, but next month we'll have a comprehensive moves guide to Dural, indeed the Iron Lady.

PLAY AS DURAL

To access the final boss character go to the character screen and enter Down, Up, Right, A and Left (D.U.R.A.L — geddit!) oh well...

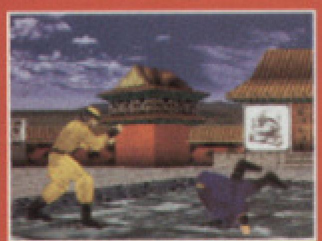
KAGE

KAGE MARU

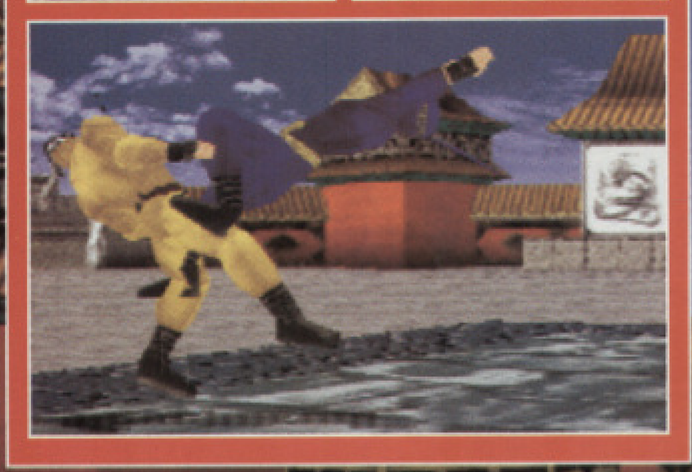
Kage, the moody Ninja, has been smarted up considerably from VF1 when, not to put too fine a point on it, he was crap. Then, apart from his spectacular air move his attacks lacked any specific character, other than a few miserable sweeps. Lo, we find him in the sequel with some excellent punch combos and rolling moves. We have five of the finest to work into your attacks.

'JUMPING DIVE'
CODE: → → +G+P+K

An astonishing move that catches any opponent by surprise. Kage rolls into the midriff and stretches out. (20%)







'SWIPE AND CHOP'
CODE: ← → +P+K , P+K

Kage's shows he has some hard upper body attacks. A combination of a heavy vertical and horizontal blow. (16%)





'HIGH PUNCHES SPINKICK' CODE: PPPK

A combination familiar to Pai and Lau players, with Kage's version even faster and more visceral. (31%)



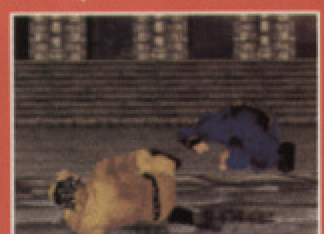




'TWO FOOT SWEEP' CODE: ↙ ↓ ↘ +K

Kage goes lower than any other competition move here to take the feet from under his opponent. Beautifully athletic. (10%)





'DASHING SPIN KICK'
CODE: ← +G+K

Surprise an unwary opponent at medium-range (25%)







JEFFRY McWILD

We'd be failing in our duty if we didn't give you a thrower character. There are two in the game; Wolf and Jeffry. Their other lumpen attacks are not half as exciting as their close-in, gripular grasps. We pick Jeffry because his are more accessible, usable and interesting than Wolf Hawfield's. And his other combat moves are much stronger than they were previously. Prepare for a toss-fest.

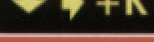
JEFFRY

KEY

To simplify our move coding, here are the attack directions and symbols.

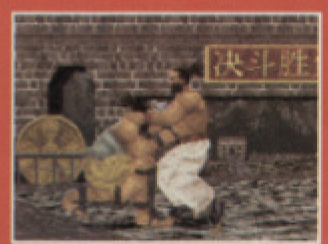
← → ↑ ↓: Joypad directions
G: Guard button (default button A)
P: Punch button (default button B)
K: Kick button (default button C)
+: Button to be held simultaneously
↙ ↓ ↘ :Joypad moved in a semi-circular movement (similar to SFII movements)

Damage for each move is shown in brackets after the description.

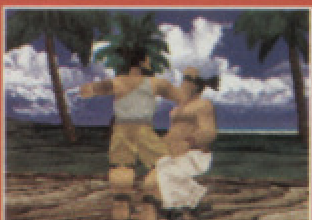
'TRPLE KNEE' CODE: ↓ → +K

Opponent must be crouching, which reduces chances. However, the effect is sickeningly brilliant. (30%)




'TRPLE HEADBUTT' CODE: ← →P+K(Repeat Twice)

A complex but utterly vicious move which has Jeffry nutting his opponent into submission. Practise the timing of each successive butt. (34%)


'SPLASH MOUNTAIN' CODE: ↙ ↙P+K

A humongous throw, and relatively simple to pull off. Jeffry hoists his prey into the air before dashing them head first against the paving. (40%)






'HIGH STOMP' CODE: → ↓+K

Jeffry gets stuck in Gary Glitter-style, by trampling all over a foe at mid-distance. (18%)




'STRAIGHT KICK, ARM HAMMER' CODE: ↓+K P

A combination of two basic attacks. The Straight kick has considerable reach, and the arm follow-up is immediate and consolidated the attack. (22%)




PAI

PAI CHAN

Virtua Fighter 2

Guide Part 2

One of the VF faves, but rather neglected in the sequel. Pai's fast punching-kicking combos are still her strength, with her throwing a little ponderous. That said, her kicking is strengthened by the inclusion of a single, spectacular dropkick, and she has a couple of new Akira-style throws.

'REAP AND PUNCH'
CODE: ← → +P+K

Similar to Akira's trip and punch, and far classier than the throws Pai had before. (25%)







'DOUBLE JUMP KICK'
CODE: G+P

An excellent propelling dropkick, but it always leaves Pai on the ground, so use it positively. (13%)





'ROLL TRIP'
CODE: ← ↓G+P

A new throw, but a variation on Pai's Judo-like techniques of VF. Good for getting out of boxed situations, and most effective when followed-up. (15%)







JACKY

JACKY BRYANT

Everyone loves Jacky, apart from us. Hardly anyone on MEAN MACHINES plays him, as his movement is less theatrical than most other characters. Things, however, have looked up considerably for VF2, and we've picked a couple of fast combos and a nasty throw to demonstrate.

'FACEPLANT'
CODE: G+P

A variation on the clothesline, when Jacky is behind his opponent, grabbing them by the neck and ramming them into the ground.





'LIGHTNING KICKS'
CODE: ↓+P+KKKKK

Jacky's new move adapts his sister's lightning kicks, but these are ultra fast and don't leave him vulnerable in execution. A nasty move. (32%)







'ROUNDHOUSE AND SWEEP'
CODE: G+K ↓+G+K

An exquisite high/low spinning combo, with the second blow quite distinct from the first, yet unblockable. Damage is near the maximum possible. (45%)





AKIRA

AKIRA YUKI

In the first game, Akira was undeniably boring. The new Akira is better, but most of us still give him a by. However, there are a host of counters and a range of throws as impressive as any in the game.

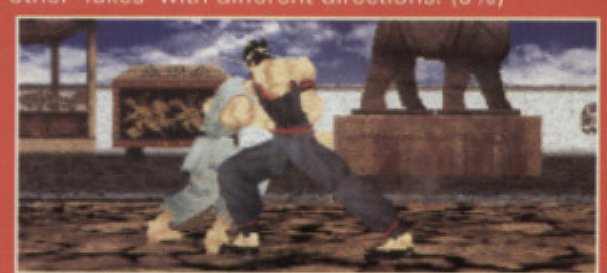
'GUT PUNCH' CODE: G+P+K

One of Akira's typical thrusting motions (oo-er) use for a devastating mid-level attack at close range. Follow up with ground attacks. (8%)




'SURPRISE EXCHANGE' CODE: ↙ +G+P

A typical 'interesting' new move. Instead of damage, Akira merely disorientates his victim. Try other 'fakes' with different directions. (0%)




'TWO HIT SHOULDER BUTT' CODE: → ← → +P+K

One of Akira's typical thrusting motions (oo-er) use for a devastating mid-level attack at close range. Follow up with ground attacks. (8%)





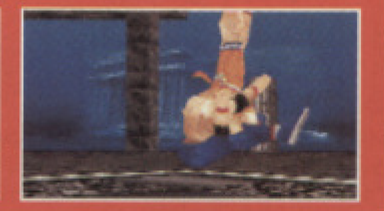

WOLF HAWKFIELD

Without a doubt the game's thrower character. Only Jeffry has more throws, but Wolf's are more varied. The only problem is his slow and generally unalloying attack moves, making him a specialised character. Nevertheless, some of those amazing throws to practise, and a single attack move with some uncharacteristic flair.

'CRUCIFIX PILEDRIVER' CODE: ↘ +G+P+K

When opponent is crouching. There are various throws accessed by changing the direction at the beginning of the code. (35%)





'FLIP UPPERCUT' CODE: ↓ → +P

Wolf unfeasibly flips his opponents backward just by applying knuckle pressure just below the chin. Shocking. (15%)

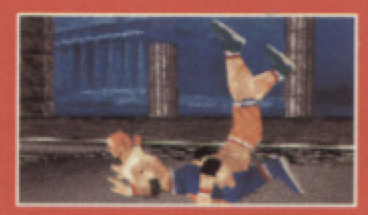




'FRANKENSTEINER' CODE: ↖ +G+K

Pure wrestling razmatazz. Wolf uses his feet to grapple his opponent and bring him over his back. As easy as any of his throws to execute. (30%)







Magic Carpet

Magic Carpet

BY: BULLFROG

RELEASE: MARCH

PRICE: £44.99

GAME TYPE: SHOOT 'EM UP

BREAKDOWN

ORIGINALITY

CHALLENGE

ACTION

STRATEGY

REFLEXES

1 PLAYERS

OPTIONS

CONTROL
JOYPAD

GAME DIFFICULTY
HARD

CONTINUES
RAM SAVE

SKILL LEVELS
2

RESPONSIVENESS
GREAT

ORIGIN

Originally engineered for PC, Bullfrog's own stunning magical world.

GAME AIM

Collect Mana by any means possible over 75 worlds.

BEAT THIS

AIM FOR 75% LEVEL RATINGS

My master is dead, and he has taken the world with him. So convinced was he of his necromantic triumph, that he had no safeguard against the power of a spell whose potential was to rip all matter apart. I, his assistant, am left and our home is shattered into numerous shards. But in his last writings, this very calamity is forseen — and he revels in it!

"The tearing apart of our living fabric is not a cause for dismay. For it may give us the opportunity to find what we seek: Mana. An unlimited supply of the most powerful essence, the very fuel of existence. And with the world reformed and the substance harboured, unlimited power."

He must share the blame for this madness with the many others who have sought power and squandered Mana on summoning creatures to do their bidding. Freed of the bonds of magic, these monsters roam the earth as lords of misrule, terrifying the people and wrecking nature.

In my master's grimoire, now my grimoire, lies my only hope. Incantations to levitate, to protect myself with fire and to bind Mana to my will. And the promise of further spells to possess as I explore the 75 worlds on my magic carpet.



ALL MANNER OF MANA

I have been having serious difficulty keeping any substantial amount of Mana on my person, so I was happy to find a spell allowing the creation of magical castles. These act as a repository for Mana which is relatively safe. However, my first attempt was ill-judged, as I built near a town, and inadvertently destroyed some houses with my perimeter walls. The castle was to come under attack from angry bowmen. There is an art to building castles! With each one comes a balloon which will shuttle to and forth, collecting Mana. At one point, I was perturbed to notice my balloon was resolutely hanging over the castle, with much Mana uncollected.



Then I realised the castle was capable of only confining so much Mana and would have to be expanded. Further incantations made it at once more ornate and effective.



Congratulations, Master Wizard: the world is restored to equilibrium.

RESORTING TO THEFT

On some worlds, the appropriation of Mana is extremely difficult, and on one was made even more so by a meddlesome opposing wizard. Despite visiting all its reaches, it became apparent that I would not possess the Mana I required to restore the world. I then decided on another course of action. Although he had shown me no malice, I descended on the castle of my brother magician and attacked it with my most powerful spells. His walls were soon compromised and the excess Mana spilled forth. However, my balloons could not reach it before he restored its walls, so, taking a deep breath, I lowered my castle and repositioned it within a fireball's throw of his. Only latterly did he perceive my plan and attack my person, but I was too strong. With ruthless persistance, I slowly bled his castle of Mana until my store was complete. Not behaviour I would normally sanction, but these are desperate times.



A SHORT TREATISE ON MAGICAL WEAPONS

Only latterly have I begun to appreciate the subtleties of my own and my enemies' Mana-powered spells of destruction. I soon realised that my master's bequest, the Fireball spell, would be insufficient to the task. First, I located a gourd that held a more powerful, rapid mutation of this spell. I was elated, but directly perturbed to find I could not use it to any effect. The page of the grimoire into which it was inserted was sealed. However, later on that same world, when my castle was much augmented, and my own body suffused with higher levels of Mana, I found I could activate its power! I have also studied the other creatures and witnessed their own use of magic. The sea creatures (I have named them Kraken) use a form of electric energy which is far in excess of my fireballs' power. Now I too have located that spell, which should advantage me considerably.









A single ball of Mana guarded by a single archer.



Forests can be sparked in deadly infernos.





THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

I spent many lessons with my master learning the rudiments of perception beyond the normal sphere of sight. With this I have been able to pinpoint the creatures of each world and, more importantly, find a quick path back to my castle. Recently I found another strange spell which seemed cogent to this realm of magic. At first it seemed to offer no benefit, but by concentrating on a detailed vision of the landscape, I began to see more than previously, including the position of my wizard enemies and their balloons. I have ordained to use this spell strategically whenever my purpose is lost.





SKIRMISH WITH THE ARMY OF DARKNESS

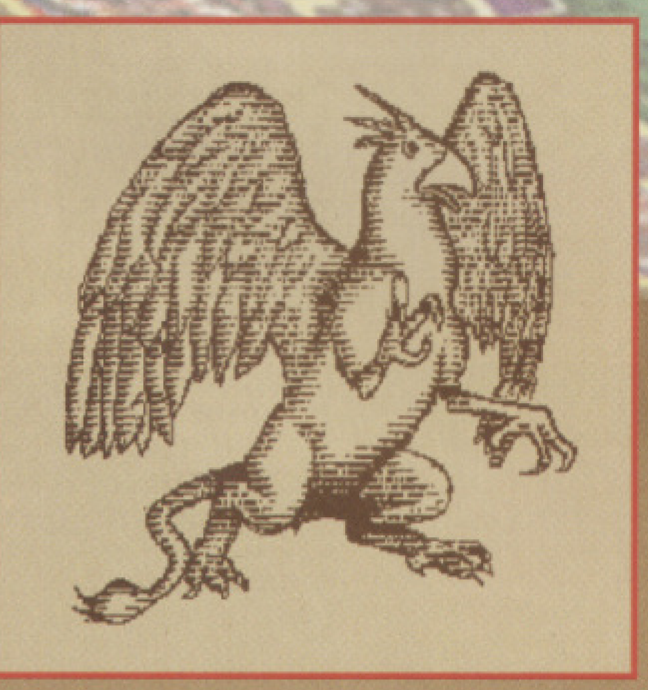
I observe that although some creatures; Kraken, dragons etc. tend to roam solitary, many of these worlds' denizens exhibit flocking behaviour. This I have learned to my cost when blundering into swarms of bees or flocks of taloned birds. In one incident, I came across a legion of strange, cloaked Undead creatures, not far from my opponent's castle. Making their relentless progress, I was delighted to see them assault his walls. This turned to dismay, however, when they marched on and showed equal aggression towards my own fortress.



THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY

Initially, I set to recovering Mana within the safe environs around my castle. I have since discovered that though unthreatening, this may not be the wisest course of action. The landscape is filled with triggering points (whether these are traps or quirks of nature I cannot say). When I fly over these I am aware of a change. Sometimes I find a new gift of Mana or spell but, just as frequently, new foes are summoned. One aspect I can always put to my favour is the portal system: a series of gates styled as mirrors that transport me home within the blink of an eye.





COMMENT

GUS

After a few days of carpeting, I can see why the cast of 'Neighbours' were finding it so addictive. MC is an incredibly compulsive experience. Initially, I was rather put-off by the control sensitivity of the carpet and the range of controls (effective play means using the top buttons, A, B, Z and C buttons constantly as well as the joypad). Also, the graphic generator, though effective, looked a little rough. It's only once you've progressed a few levels into the game, that you realise this doesn't matter. Magic Carpet becomes an epic struggle between yourself and a clutch of other desperate wizards. The graphics are more than capable of creating a fantastic world to zoom around, and many of the later spells are sensational. MC has more subtlety than any other Bullfrog title and there are many ways to achieve your objectives: work with the computer wizards, steal their Mana, fly gung-ho or stick to your castle walls. I want to go fly again.

COMMENT

MARCUS

Look beyond the struggling graphics, the seemingly complex controls and the undeniably epic premise, and you'll find something very special at the heart of Magic Carpet. The more you play this game the more immersed you'll become in a compelling parallel reality of wizardry and wonder. Bullfrog have once again come up with a game that rewards thoughtful dedication with rewarding and well-rounded gameplay – this is a finely balanced mix of shoot 'em up action and strategy/adventure. And it's all top notch stuff. The extra innovations, like the atmospheric sound-effects and the dramatically-cued musical stings, help elevate this game to the realms of the classic. I was lucky enough to spend a weekend with Magic Carpet. It wasn't nearly long enough.



GRAPHICS 90

▲A threatening, uplifting, exhilarating 3-D world.
▼Some roughness and harsh clipping of the middle distance.



ANIMATION 82

▲Realistic physics of Mana and creature movement.

MUSIC 88

▲Perfectly in-tune with the game atmosphere, and clever use of incidental 'danger music' to up the pace.

EFFECTS 90

▲Fantastic mystic effects and thunderous explosions, as well as depth-cued creature noises.

PLAYABILITY 93

▲Like a living board game: inherent simplicity but vast depth and infinite drama.
▼Daunting to control in the beginning.

LASTABILITY 92

▲The best spells and the fiercest creatures are jealously guarded by later levels. You are forced to struggle every inch of the way.

OVERALL

Magic Carpet's world is like no other in video games. Take wings for a flight of magical fancy.





BY: SEGA

RELEASE: OUT NOW (IMPORT)

PRICE: IMPORT (£60)

GAME TYPE: BEAT 'EM UP

BREAK DOWN

1-8 PLAYERS

ORIGINALITY

CHALLENGE

ACTION

STRATEGY

REFLEXES

OPTIONS

CONTROL
JOYPAD

GAME DIFFICULTY
TOUGH

CONTINUES
9

SKILL LEVELS
3

RESPONSIVENESS
BRILLIANT

ORIGIN

As far as we can tell, this is an all original idea that Treasure came up with especially for the Saturn.

GAME AIM

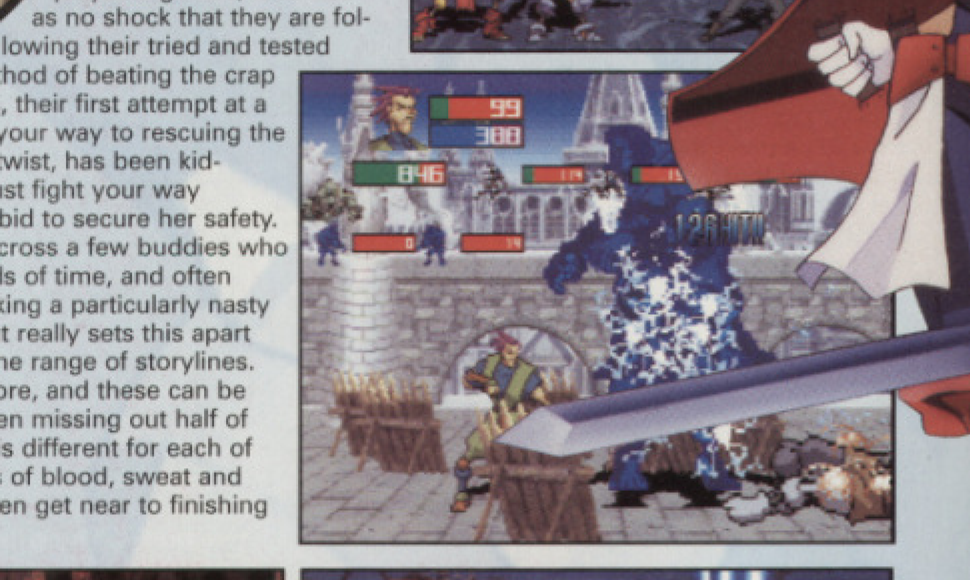
Rescue some Princess, while giving the baddies a good kicking. A novel idea if ever there was one.

BEAT THIS

Find 80% of characters.

They sound like super powerful foster parents, and they have arms that look like cocktail sticks with peas for muscles. One of them is a rabbit called Edward M. Cognac that can turn itself into a fireball, and another is called Randy. So who are they? Escapees from the Dykebar Mental Hospital (one for the Yob anoraks there), or the tramps who rummage through our rubbish bins every night? Unsurprisingly the answer is neither of them, as they are the characters from Sega's new beat 'em up, Guardian Heroes.

Although released by Sega, Guardian Heroes was programmed by the gaming wizards down at Treasure, who you'll know bought us classics like Gunstar Heroes and Dynamite Headdy if you read last month's preview. As they are renowned for their action packed ultra playable games, it comes as no shock that they are following their tried and tested method of beating the crap out of multiple characters in this, their first attempt at a Saturn game.Whilst you are on your way to rescuing the princess (who, in an innovative twist, has been kidnapped by an evil force) you must fight your way through droves of enemies in a bid to secure her safety. Along the way you may come across a few buddies who can be recruited for short periods of time, and often they can prove the key to unlocking a particularly nasty boss character. But the thing that really sets this apart from the other beat 'em ups is the range of storylines. There are over 25 levels to explore, and these can be tackled in virtually any order, even missing out half of them if you want. The storyline is different for each of the characters, meaning buckets of blood, sweat and tears will be shed before you even get near to finishing this.





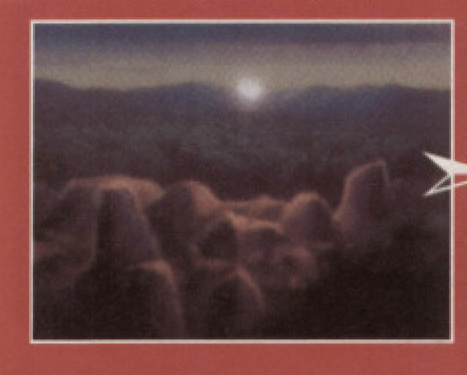




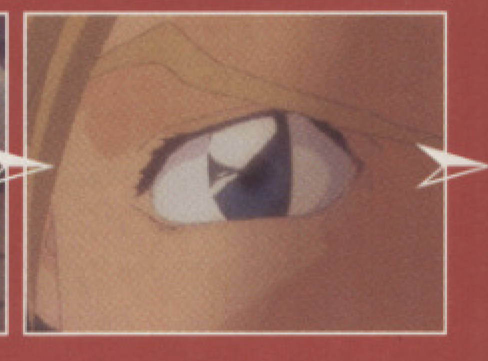
The green bloke was propping up the bar, until someone pinched it off him.

CARTOON TIME

The intro has been kept up to the same standard as the rest of the game's impressive graphics in order to set a similar tone. The superb Japanese cartoon style has been transported over as the story depicts the rise to power of the evil clan, the kidnap of the Princess and the warriors who are aiming to get them back again.



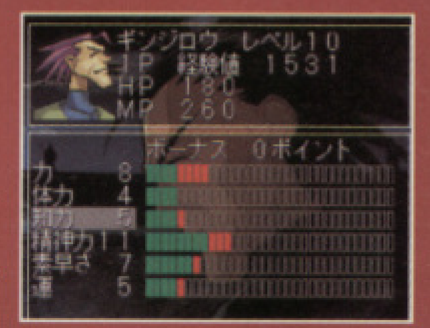






PAUSE FOR THOUGHT

Something that was added after we played the 80% complete version is the pause screen. This gives you snippets of info about the character you happen to be playing. It may not serve that much use in general, but helps in places. It tells you what level of experience you are on, and the numbers at the bottom show how many experience points you have and how many points you have to go until you can go up another level. To gain experience points, all you have to do is battle with opponents. Also displayed are your hit and magic points, current and maximum levels and your character elements, which you increase when you upgrade yourself at the end of certain levels.





Watch out for this bloke's red hot fart attack.



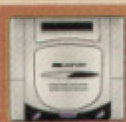










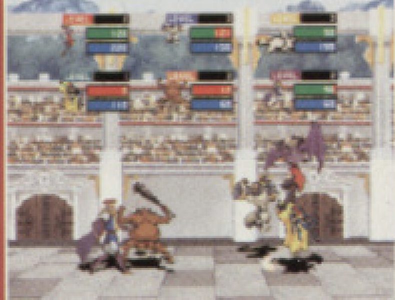


WANNA BE IN MY GANG?

The great thing about Guardian Heroes is that every time you play, the chances of finding something new is high. This feature serves a real purpose in the multi player mode. For every character you fight against, he or she will be available to select as a playable character in the versus mode. However, they only become available to play as once they have been beaten. As you become more and more familiar with the game, the last two or three characters become fiendishly difficult to find, with you continuously retracing your own steps. And keep an eye out for some of the characters from Treasure's Megadrive game, Gunstar Heroes, who make guest appearances later on.









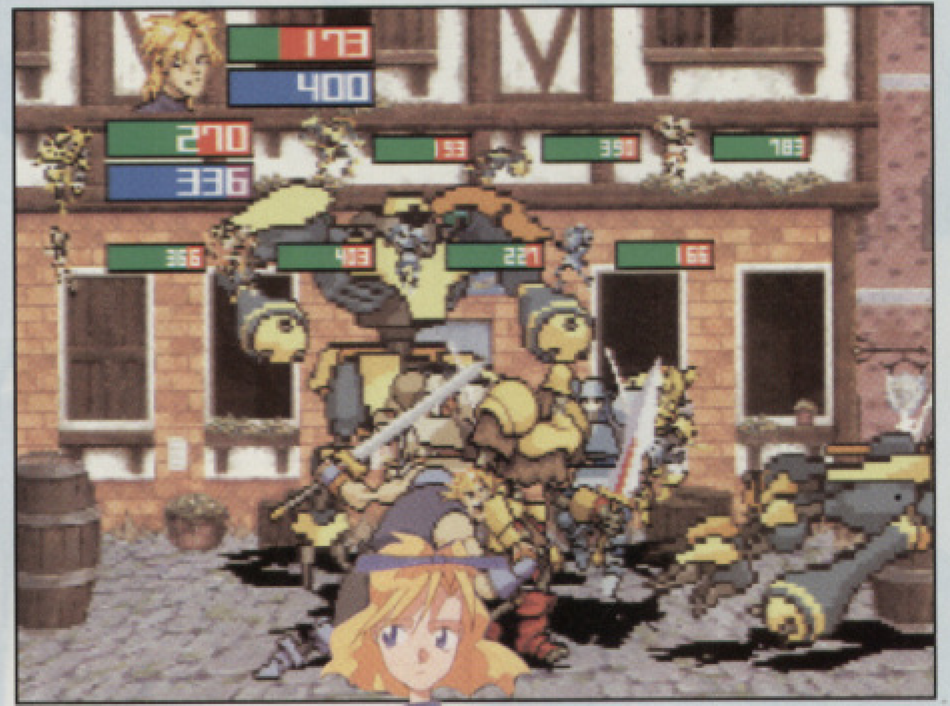


The special Christmas edition of celebrity squares, with far better-looking contestants.

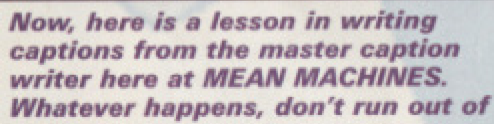








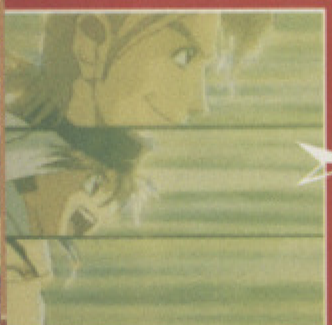




Now, here is a lesson in writing captions from the master caption writer here at MEAN MACHINES. Whatever happens, don't run out of



Oh, lovie darlings. I don't deserve this award, I mean the cast were superb and I just took all the praise. Your're all so kind.















LEFT AT THE LIGHTS

The amount of different paths you can take is frankly dazzling. At certain points in the game, after a boss has been defeated or you are about to face a particularly nasty stage, you are given a number of choices to decide which path to take, or who to fight. For some of the characters, whole levels are different from others, so to say you never get the same game twice is a bit of an understatement. Once these choices have been made, the length of the game can increase or shorten as a result. The ending can also be different, depending on who is fought.



And left, and 2 and 3 and 4, and right and...

COMMENT



STEVE

How do they do it? Treasure have created another masterpiece with this game, and if this is anything to go by, the Saturn, Sega and Treasure are going to have a beeeeautiful relationship. Everything about this game oozes class – the graphics, the sound, and especially the playability. The thought of finding all the characters to play as may seem like a daunting and slightly boring prospect, but to tell the truth, it increases the game's lastability tenfold. The idea of having three planes of battle also adds a bit more novelty to the proceedings, and means that fights will be going on all over the shop, with chaos and 'hit the buttons and hope' type gameplay the name of the game in desperate situations. All this on-screen mayhem is a great laugh – never before has anyone attempted to cram in so much action. There are however, some sections of slow down, not so much because of the amount of characters visible, but because of the awesome magic spells being used. Combos are also really easy to do, especially with magic thrown in. I managed a 154 hit with Ibuchi and his particular blend of magic power. Standard combos can be pretty devastating as well, with two or more characters ganging up on one, to get up to 50 hits. There's nothing more to say than invest in this highly original, highly entertaining, multi-player punch feast. Awesome.

COMMENT



GUS

Guardian Heroes is an excellent piece of programming, typically Treasure, and so many of its features are particularly original: real manga graphics, multi-plane action and considerable variety in the course of the game depending on character and plot choices. The backbone of the game is magic, with spells instantly accessible and stunning to behold. But I have to go out on a limb and wonder if the playability is all it's cracked up to be. Sometimes the action is just to manic to feel properly in control, and the huge amount of continues on the Japanese version makes the game structure feel too 'loose', with you penetrating too far too quickly. Hopefully, Sega Europe will take note and make this an untarnished classic in the UK.

GRAPHICS 92



▲Every player looks excellent, and the cartoon style suits the game down to a tee.
▼Some of the scaling is a bit dodgy.

ANIMATION 90



▲Super fluid animation makes the characters look awesome.

MUSIC 94

▲Saxophone cuts, jazzy tunes and funky beats man! Strange choice for music, but it all works well.

EFFECTS 91

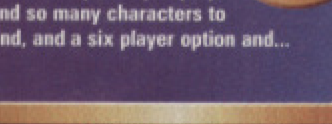


▲All the 'arggh', 'eeuuff' and 'rarrgh' noises are here, and all the funny chants that no-one can understand.

PLAYABILITY 93

▲Loads of characters and loads of levels means there is plenty to play here.

LASTABILITY 94



▲Virtually a different game every time you play, and so many characters to find, and a six player option and...

OVERALL

Awesome. Multi player beat 'em ups now have a grand master to look up to. And envy.



93









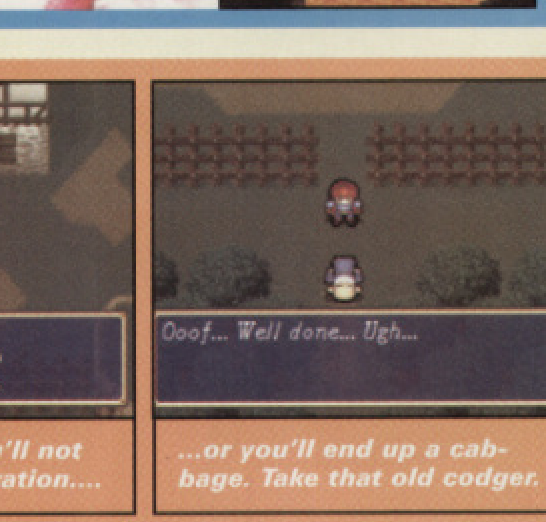


SHINING WISDOM

The Japanese and RPGs seem to go together like Bubble and Squeak, or throwing up and alcohol. To put it bluntly, hand in hand. In particular the Lunar series and the Shining series have been extraordinarily popular, with mass coverage in the Japanese specialist press. They go bonkers for a quest to rescue the kidnapped Princess, whilst roaming ancient lands and defeating the minions of an Evil/Dark warrior. And it's not just restricted to the Sega side of proceedings. Nintendo have had phenomenal success with Zelda and the forthcoming Mario RPG is causing more than its fair share of excitement.

But, until recently, the European public has been immune to the craze. RPGs would be shipped in by Sega in small numbers and under cover of darkness, almost apologetically. Shining Wisdom is a surprise conversion of the Japanese game – a surprise because we were reliably informed that it wasn't to be arriving on these shores. But, lo and behold, it plops into our palms, courtesy of a new release policy at Sega UK. While many events of the previous games are remembered and the original characters are part of your new hero's ancestry, the old format of the game has been abolished, and has been replaced with a Zelda-style adventure. Gone are the long drawn out battle sequences, and in are real-time skirmishes on a smaller scale. However, the plot and feel of Shining Wisdom, the tracking down lost objects and finding the Dark Forces have strong resonance with the Megadrive titles in the Shining Force series.



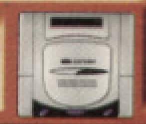


Oi Grandad, NO! You'll not tell me to do acceleration....

...or you'll end up a cabbage. Take that old codger.

CHOP CHOP!

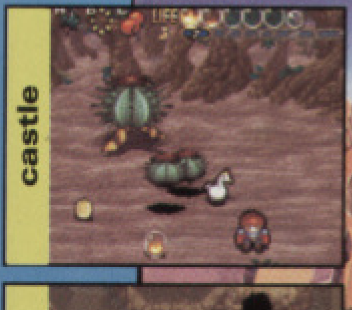
The first thing you are required to do in the game is beat up your old grandad, who has nurtured you since your mother and father died a few years back. You don't exactly beat him up, but use your Acceleration attack on him. This is basically a form of speeding up and, coupled with the right Orbs, can make a potent weapon. By pressing any of the top three buttons, the numbers underneath your energy bar will start to rise. When the highest number is reached, then acceleration is at its peak, and that is the time to use it against some of your enemies, in the first case, old grandpa. By running into him and knocking him to the floor, he will tell you you are ready for your journey, and you will begin.





WORLD AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

The area you had to wander around in Shining Force was pretty vast, with towns and secret caves to visit at your will. Wisdom seems to have somehow increased the overall game map, and still added lots more towns and sub levels to look at, and caves to dive down. Take a look at the map, and where each of the towns are.



castle

caverns

Beyond this point is the West District of Odegan. Unwary visitors, do not enter.





royal crypt



odegan city

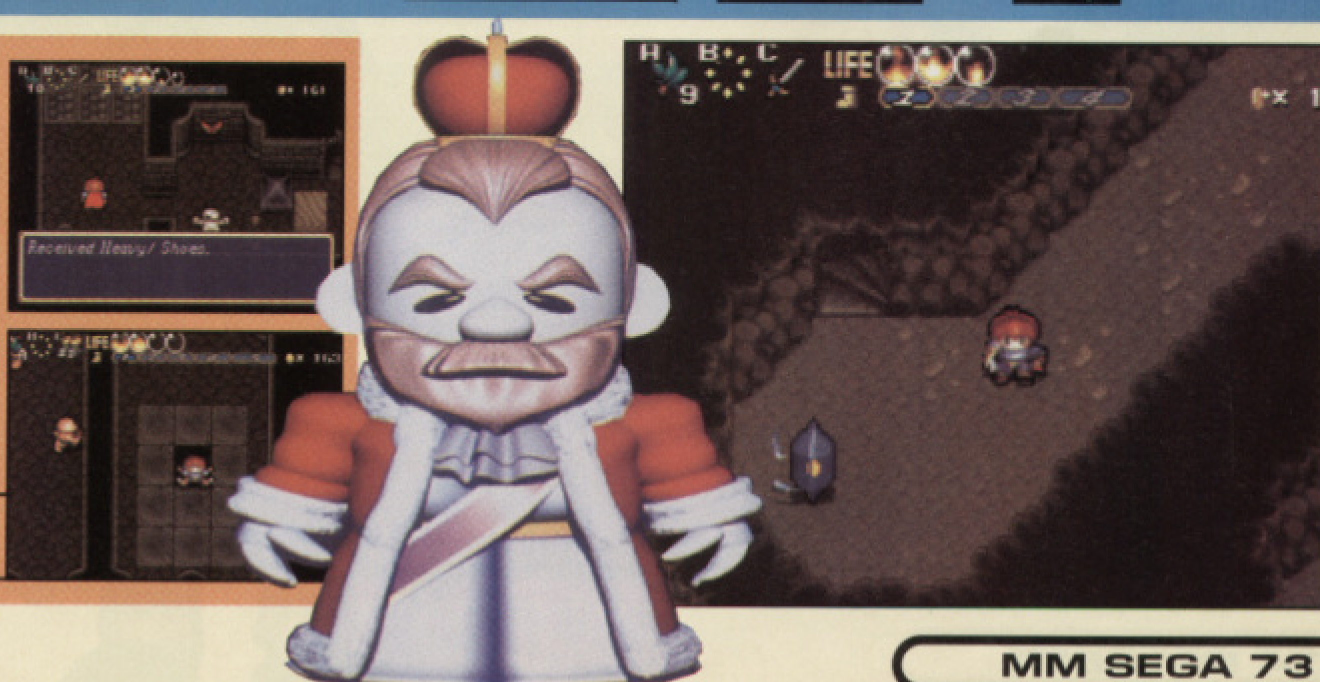


hermit's abode

JUMP AROUND

Reach the Royal Crypt, and if you are going along the right tracks, you should acquire a pair of Heavy Boots. These are used to jump through sections of the floor that have become weak in their old age. To finish the mini level that is the Crypt, you have to find the section that will lead to the boss once it is smashed. Find the area with a single weak spot, and jump on it to fall down to meet the gang of Elves.

Don't jump here or... Oh, too late. Stop messing about...





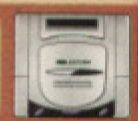
HUNT FOR BARGAINS

The Odegan City, located just before the Castle, contains the first shop you should make a point of visiting. The items it contains are pretty useless on the face of things, but become essential as you progress. The Angel Wing should be bought, to enable a quick warp back the entrance of the dungeon or cavern you are in. The Magic Book gives you the opportunity to save the game whenever you enter a new stage, which is naturally useful, so take two. Medical Herbs never go amiss, replenishing your energy completely in the early stages of the game. They are also cheap, which helps.

Gee, thanks very much. You must be "the infamous Dweeb", who thinks he's hard.

Snap, Crackle and Pop!

Spooky goings on here.





ON THE WEST SIDE

The game map is split into two halves, and when you begin, the east side is the only side you have access to. Until you manage to find the Power Glove, then the west side is out of bounds. The only way to get to either side is by the caverns just above the castle. Once inside, you'll see that your way is blocked by spikes, but it is possible to sneak through, even if energy is lost. Charge up your accelerator to full, and then keep running until you touch the statue in the centre. After you have sustained about three or four hits you should break through, retracting the spikes, and continuing your progress. Once you have the glove however, you can fire that at the switch to lower the spikes.



COMMENT



STEVE

Shining Force was my favourite Megadrive game ever. Fact. Shining Force 2 then became my favourite game ever. Fact. When I heard this was coming out for the Saturn, I nearly wet my little panties. Fact. Yes it's fair to say that this was my most eagerly awaited game so far on the Saturn. And at this moment in time, I can faithfully report that I am not disappointed with this at all. In fact, it's awesome. The fact that the whole graphical look of the game has been changed brings fresh feeling to the idea, and the slightly tedious battle sequences have made a short trip to the bin, and been replaced with the wandering hero-type game. The action is very similar to Zelda, which some may view as a gripe, and others as a good thing. Personally, I think it's good, as Zelda was one of the best SNES games ever, and anything that bears resemblance to that is setting off on the right foot. The graphics are smart on the whole, and convey a mystical and adventurous feel. Typical RPG tunes that change in each location are also part of the package. But it's the playability and lastability that really make this the game that it is. It's just so addictive, enticing you to find that elusive object and then carrying on playing until you find its main use, and using it to open another part of the map. It's bloody hard as well, so progress may not be as quick as you may think. So, the Shining team have done it again with another top notch role-playing game. If you have any Wisdom, you'll buy this.

BOMB THE BASS

When you have progressed a little further into the game, more and more weapons become available to you. Some of these are vital as you cannot progress without them (for example, The Mole Gloves and Heavy Boots). Others, although important, will aid you in some different areas. Bombs, for example, will open up all sorts of hideaways when placed in the right spots. Keep an eye out for cracks in the rocks (as shown) to lead to secret sections.

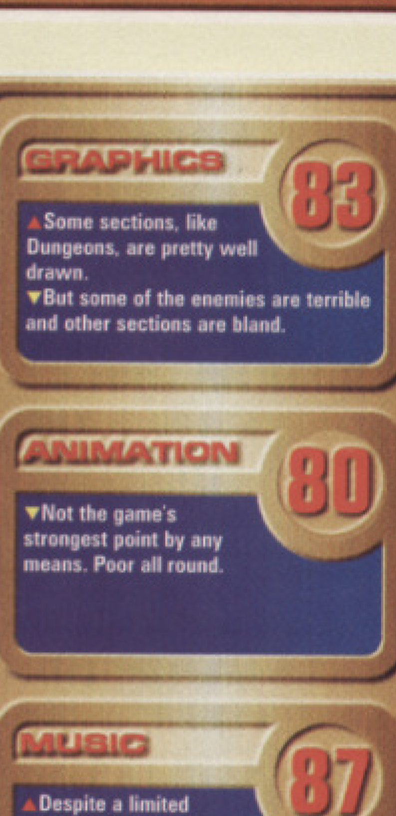


See that crack in the wall? Well, when you have the Blast Orb, and the Heavy Boots, run into here to make a passage through to the secret cave, and new treasures.

COMMENT

GUS

Fans of two of the all-time greats, Shining Force and Zelda (Super Nintendo) will be in their element with Shining Wisdom. It's quirky and very Japanese, a style of game not usually attractive to Sega, but the new mood there me see more of this game. Being brutally honest, the graphics are not that great, the sound is irritating, but once you've got the initial plot, there's acre of dungeon real estate to wander through, and oodles of action.



GRAPHICS 83
▲Some sections, like Dungeons, are pretty well drawn.
▼But some of the enemies are terrible and other sections are bland.

ANIMATION 80
▼Not the game's strongest point by any means. Poor all round.

MUSIC 87
▲Despite a limited amount of tunes, they don't become repetitive at all.

EFFECTS 85
▼Perhaps some speech now and again wouldn't have gone amiss.

PLAYABILITY 94
▲You won't find a more playable RPG anywhere. With so much to do, it'll keep you hooked for ages.

LASTABILITY 95
▲How hard is this? Bloody difficult that's for sure. Weeks of play are in here, and you WON'T find everything on your first go.

OVERALL
Another top notch RPG romps home from the Shining team. Despite a change in basic formula, everything holds together well. Superb.





With a scenario straight from the pages of Viz, Darius seriously expects us to involve ourselves in a battle with intergalactic...fish. Yes, a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, a peaceful land-loving world was attacked by hordes of Haddock interceptors, interstellar pikes and cockles with outboard ion engines. Those warmongering masters of seafood, (should that be fishmongers?) left little behind, except a small squadron of fighters out to shed a few scales. Leaving you to battle across twenty plus stages in a side-scrolling shoot 'em up that looks like something out of the arcades in the time before Sega's polygon games. As you go you'll be confronted with a veritable sea life centre of cyber finny tribes armed to the gills.

THE GOLD RUN

In place of a linear level path, the game has a wide range of stages that fan out, with a choice of two stages from each completed stage. This means you will have to complete the game several times to see all the areas.





BAITED BREATH

If there's one part of the game set to concentrate your mind, it's the boss encounters that end each stage. Although few of them are as visually impressive as the initial face-off with the golden ogre (see inset) they each have a formidable armoury of attacks under those fins.

GOLDEN OGRE

The boss on the first stage, Golden Ogre, is actually a very impressive composite of animated polygons, that swipes his tail, flakes his scales and, er, launches that mouth laser which is a well-known part of fish anatomy.



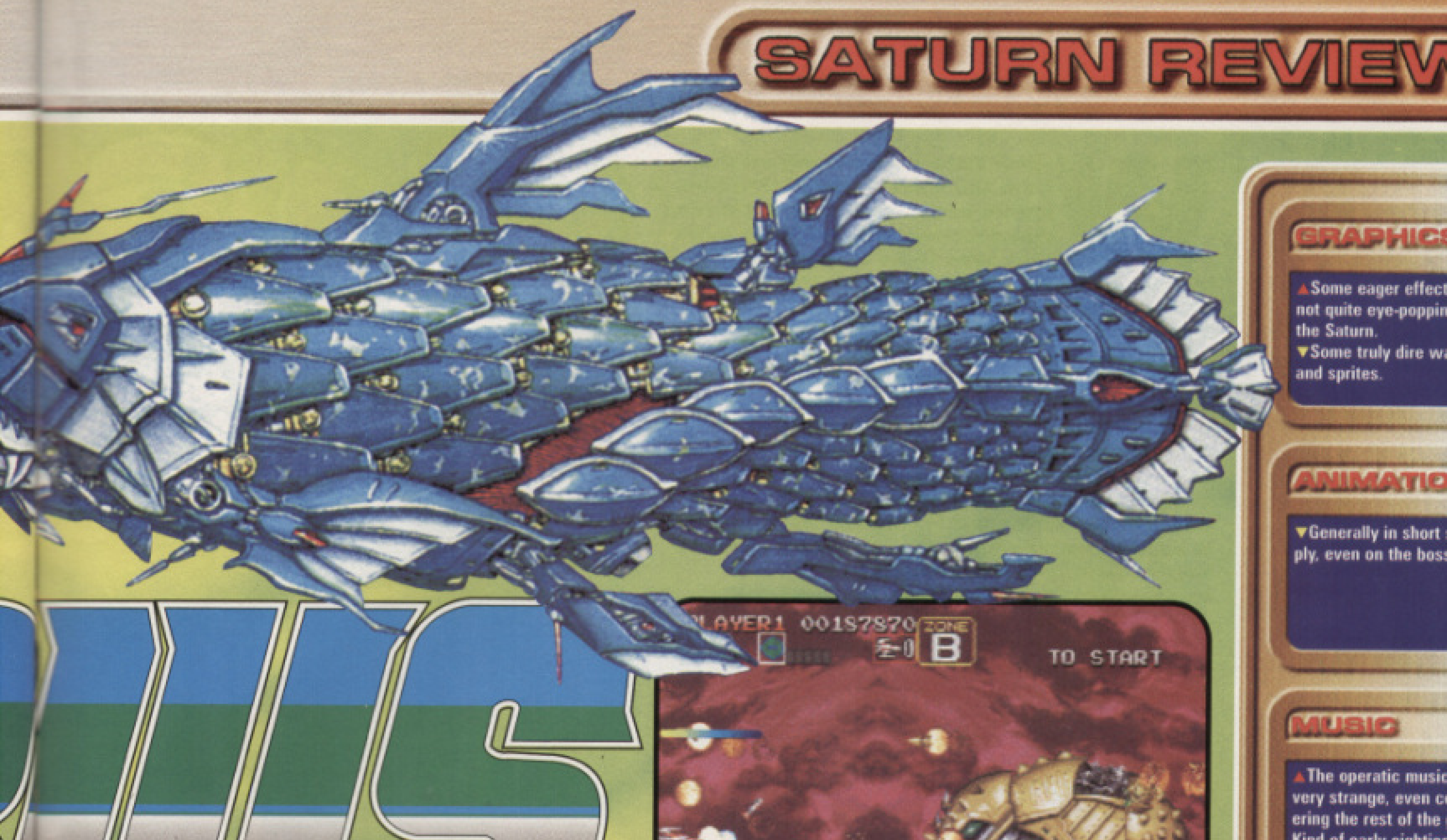


Blast your way through a shoot-out on the pumice planet

QUITE A CATCH

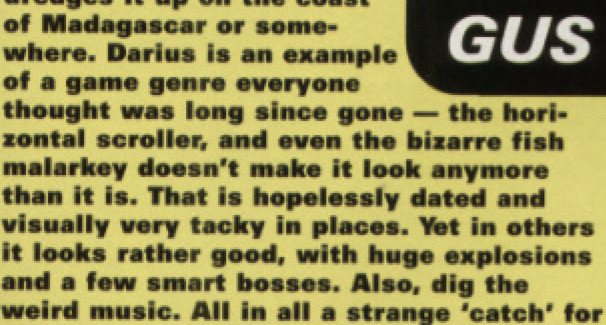
The game operates a power-up system, but not really under your control. Continue picking up the shields and it will increase or replenish your powers in three areas; missile weapons (green shield); deflector shields (blue shields); main weapons (red shields).





THE PEARL FISHERS

One feature approaching novelty is the occasional opportunity to hijack the baddies to your own ends. Certain creatures have pearls embedded in their form. Grab these with colliding with the rest of the body and the fish will turn its fire against its former compatriots.



COMMENT



GUS

This game should be called 'Ceolocanyth. Why? Because it's a cool word and best describes what Darius is. A ceolocanyth is an ancient fish that everyone imagines is extinct until someone dredges it up on the coast of Madagascar or somewhere. Darius is an example of a game genre everyone thought was long since gone — the horizontal scroller, and even the bizarre fish malarkey doesn't make it look anymore than it is. That is hopelessly dated and visually very tacky in places. Yet in others it looks rather good, with huge explosions and a few smart bosses. Also, dig the weird music. All in all a strange 'catch' for Acclaim to make, snapping up a very Japanesey title. However, we can't deny that it's rather fun to play, and at the very sensible price, not at all repellent.

COMMENT

STEVE

Strange old fella this. It's not exactly groundbreaking, but it still manages to prove that shoot 'em ups are alive and kicking. The fishy feel is a wierd angle to take, but some of the more impressive bosses (particularty the big yellow fish) are really smart, and show that it was worth going for. Those of you wanting something new and original may find this won't be your kettle of, er, fish, but others will love it.



GRAPHICS — 78



▲Some eager effects, if not quite eye-popping for the Saturn.
▼Some truly dire wallpaper graphics and sprites.

ANIMATION — 71

▼Generally in short supply, even on the bosses.

MUSIC — 82

▲The operatic music is very strange, even considering the rest of the game. Kind of early eighties experimental synth. We dig it.

EFFECTS — 75



▲Lots of bangs, crashes, claxons. And moanings.
▼Pretty bog standard stuff.

PLAYABILITY — 80

▲As non-nonsense and as challenging as blasting gets. Imagine Parodius with more attitude.
▼Suffers from being simplistic and cruddy in places.

LASTABILITY — 73

▲You'll find it more than a tad tough, and it does become strangely compulsive.
▼Superficial next to the likes of Thunderhawk 2.

OVERALL

One of those crap games like those crap tunes you can't help humming. A possessor of a perverse attraction.



MAG DR



Wahey! Here's something original from the Land of the Rising Sun. A puzzle game, with cute little rendered characters and some balls that have to be matched together in lines of three. A game with all the innovation of John Major's wardrobe. Magical Drop (or Chain Reaction as it's confusingly called on the side of the box) is slightly different in terms of how you match up these balls.
The object of this is to prevent balls from reaching the bottom of the screen, instead of putting them there. The only thing you have to aid you in this quest, is a small grappling hook. By shooting this up towards the balls, it will hook onto whichever colour it touches first, and pull it back down to where you are standing. Once this is done, you have one of two options. You can either send it back up to the balls already in the game area, or you can hook down any more spheres of the same colour. The object after all this is to link up as many of the same colour balls as possible, causing them to disappear. Right, all that sorted? Good.

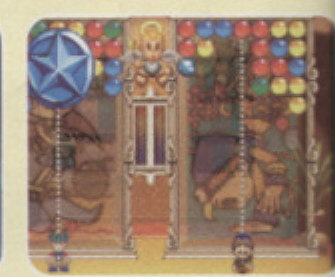


A LOAD OF BALLS

One of the variants of the game styles is the challenge mode. Each of the characters is given a difficulty level from one to four and then you are given a set of twenty pre-saved layouts of balls, and a limited amount of moves to make all the balls disappear. This may not sound difficult, but trust us when we say that Steve had a full head of hair before playing it, and now his bonce is smoother than a baby's bottom. If you work through the twenty in the order they are numbered, then the difficulty will increase accordingly.







WIDE EYED AND BALL-LESS

Surprisingly, in a game like this, each of the wide-eyed and big-mouthed Japanese characters do actually have an affect on the game. On the player select screen, a stat screen will appear when each person is highlighted. If a little icon appears at the top of the screen, that is their special ball. Match three of these up and, depending on the icon colour, all of the coloured blocks matching that colour will disappear. Most of the characters have one icon to help them, and the wizard has two, but these don't necessarily aid all of the time. In desperate times, trying to get the final icon to match up the set is tricky, and can leave lots of balls piled up together, so be selective in using them.





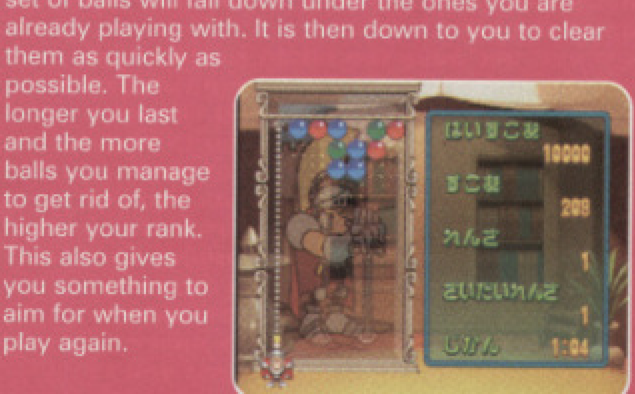
Once the sword has gone, all the yellow balls will vanish.





RANK ME BABY!

The ranking mode is yet another variant on the basic idea. You start as you would for a normal game but, at timed intervals, another set of balls will fall down under the ones you are already playing with. It is then down to you to clear them as quickly as possible. The longer you last and the more balls you manage to get rid of, the higher your rank. This also gives you something to aim for when ypu play again.
uld for a normal game but, at timed intervals, another set of balls will fall down under the ones you are already playing with. It is then down to you to clear them as quickly as possible. The longer you last and the more balls you manage to get rid of, the higher your rank. This also gives you something to aim for when you play again.

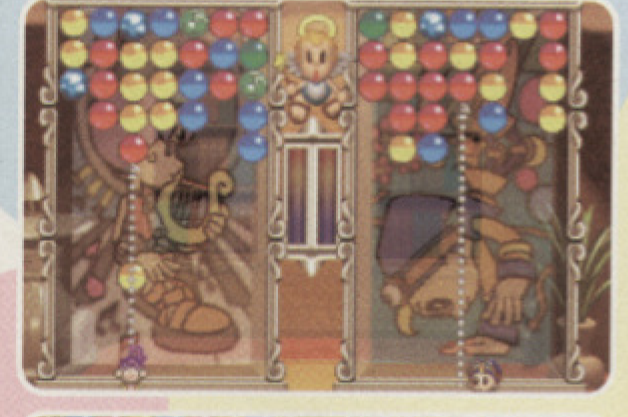


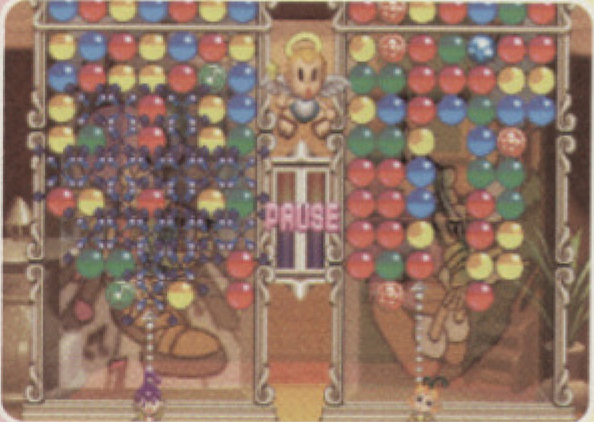
COMMENT



MARCUS

This instantly brought back memories of Baku Baku, a cutesy puzzle game I was widely accused of underrating in its recent review. Magical Drop is a similarly addictive twist on a nearly identical theme, but improves on Baku Baku in my opinion because it presents a wider variety of game options and largely strips out the most pukesome elements of its predecessor's sugary presentation. As a result, this is less likely to appeal to very young players (it will be too hard for many of them anyway) but earns my vote as being the better of the two games. The best bet for the Saturn's top puzzler.





COMMENT



STEVE

Having seen various screenshots of this in the Japanese press, I have to say that I thought it looked like pants. And although it has dispelled most of my previous doubts, I still have a nagging doubt that is preventing me from giving it a big score. The best thing about it is that it is so addictive. The number of variables on the original game idea is enough to warrant hours of play, but, conversely, this is also the main fault. Sometimes the game can become impossibly hard, especially in the pre-saved challenge option where frustration set in and my concentration wavered. But, on two player mode, it is a top blast and is matched only by Baku Baku in terms of playability. If you know someone who can get their hands on it, and you have the patience for some rock hard puzzles, then this is recommended.

GRAPHICS



▲Simplistic but effective, and the characters all look pretty smart.

ANIMATION



▼There isn't really much scope for animation in a game like this.

MUSIC



▼Cheesy tunes are fine for the first two minutes, but after that it all gets a bit annoying.

EFFECTS



▲Lots of speech, but we can't understand any of it. The hook noise is good, though

PLAYABILITY



▲It is extremely playable, and worthy of a lot of time in multi-player mode.

LASTABILITY

84

▲Variants on the game styles are good in one player mode...
▼But only for a short while, as it becomes very frustrating.



A fine game that is worth looking into if you are a fan of puzzlers. But those with no patience may shelve it after a couple of goes.







BY BMG

RELEASE APRIL

PRICE £44.99

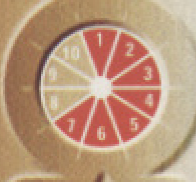
GAME TYPE SHOOT 'EM UP

BREAK DOWN

1 PLAYERS



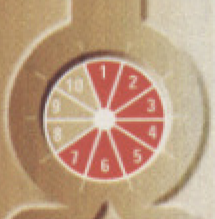
ORIGINALITY



CHALLENGE



ACTION



STRATEGY

REFLEXES

OPTIONS

CONTROL JOYPAD

GAME DIFFICULTY AVERAGE

CONTINUES SAVE GAME

SKILL LEVELS 1

RESPONSIVENESS SLOW

ORIGIN

Originally A 3DO game called Solar Eclipse which, funnily enough, didn't exactly win rave reviews.

GAME AIM

With your team of crack fighter pilots, traverse the multiple asteroid fields and planets to destroy the enemy legion.

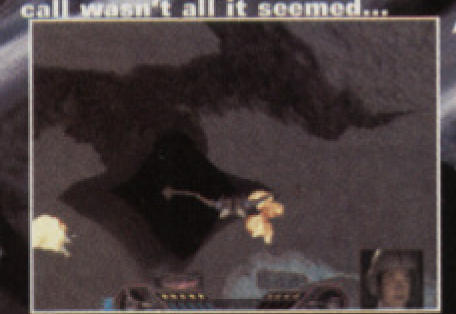
BEAT THIS

Level 4

TITAN WARS

So what do aspiring actors do to break into the Hollywood limelight? Some cruise the casting couches until fame comes their way, others perform lewd acts in naughty videos, waiting for the big break. But for those 'actors/actresses' (we use the term loosely) who are going nowhere, or whose careers have been and gone, there is only one thing left to do: star in a computer game. Take the bloke who played Luke Skywalker in the Star Wars films. Where has he gone since then? Eh? A starring role in Wing Commander 3 and 4 that's where. Not exactly something to pop at the top of the old CV is it?

And here we have the latest batch of LA wannabes, led by the babe from Babylon 5, enriching Titan Wars with their thespian turns. It's a 3-D shooting game, in which the cast play the other pilots of your flight squadron. They aid you as you set out to answer a distress call from the survivor of an asteroid-core mining station, which you see being mysteriously blown up in the intro. Then, somewhere along the line, a load of enemy spacecraft decide that they don't want you to answer the call, and try to wipe you out. In true Alien tradition, it soon transpires that the distress call wasn't all it seemed...



ALL CHANGE

No shooting game would be complete without all the gratuitous weapon power ups, so to keep up with tradition, this game has the full quota.

MISSILES



HOMING LASER



SCATTER GUN



SHIELD BOOST

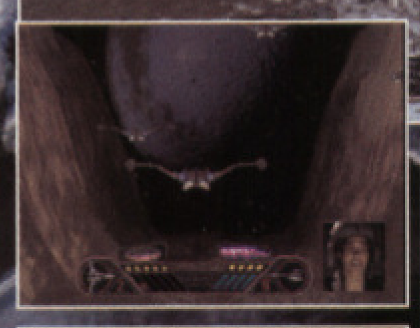


EXTRA LIFE



MANUAL LASER

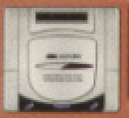




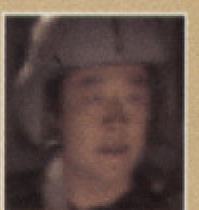




Move around a bit. Shoot some stuff. Duck around that floaty thing. Shoot some stuff. Fly through that thing...



KIRK TO ENTERPRISE



Throughout the game a little TV screen appears in the bottom corner, and one of the co-pilots will tell you something they think you should know. Most of these are of no use at all, and come along the lines of 'They're turning me into Swiss cheese'. Other pilots sound like a German teacher with a lisp. However, others will give you bits of info on how to pass certain parts of the level and others will tell you how to kill specific baddies.

COMMENT



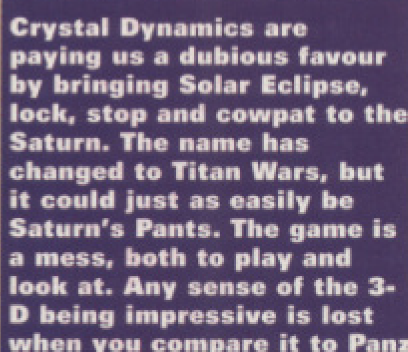
STEVE

Cue fanfare, and roll out the carpet as we proudly announce the MEAN MACHINES crap Saturn game of the month. Well, someone had to win didn't they? And this one beat all the winners hands down, due to crapness of the third degree. It's not that the game looks bad, in fact it's OK in the graphics department, but it's from there that everything goes downhill. The speech and the sound are so bad that the actors sound like Darth Vader with a cold. Trying to understand them is virtually impossible and they end up becoming an annoying distraction more than anything else. And then there's the ship. If you tap the direction pad in any direction then you're probably going to end up crashing into the side of the caverns, causing you to blow up. It's very annoying not being able to study the on-screen action because you're steadying your ship. Oh dear, very poor. Go away. Crap.





COMMENT



GUS

Crystal Dynamics are paying us a dubious favour by bringing Solar Eclipse, lock, stop and cowpat to the Saturn. The name has changed to Titan Wars, but it could just as easily be Saturn's Pants. The game is a mess, both to play and look at. Any sense of the 3-D being impressive is lost when you compare it to Panzer Dragoon, and that was last year. Playing it is a frenetic but unrewarding experience. CD have better to offer, so lets see it soon.





AND CUE THE MUSIC

After each of the levels has been successfully completed, you are 'rewarded' with a touch more of the plot unfolding to help you get into the story. These come in the form of the previously mentioned FMV sequences, and basically show the team's involvement in the game. After the first mission is completed, the action reverts back to your base, and instead of congratulating you on a job well done, a Captain Flash-heart type bloke tells you "That's not the way we do it round here," and promptly gives you a bit of a lecture. And your reply? "You don't wanna piss me off!" Amazing. Let's just say we can't see any Oscars on the horizon.



"Hi, I'm a dweeb who can't act."
"Oh yeah, well I've got a bigger quiff than you."
Welcome to the Eldorado acting masterclass.

GRAPHICS



73

▲The only plus point of the game. Some nice graphical touches crop up from time to time.
▼Some of the levels are too similar to each other.

ANIMATION



50

▼Must have forgotten about this when they were programming. Never mind.

MUSIC



54

▼Typical 'bash it out quick' music that gets on your nerves after about five minutes.

EFFECTS



49

▼Speech is terrible during the game and the dubbing in the FMV bits resembles the Ferrero Rocher advert.

PLAYABILITY



51

▼Initially OK, but as the game goes on and sections get tougher it quickly becomes tedious and boring.

LASTABILITY

50

▼Because it's boring, you won't want to play it for long. And the levels are all too similar.

OVERALL

A terrible game that is made worse by dodgy ship-handling and God awful acting. One to forget in a hurry.



52





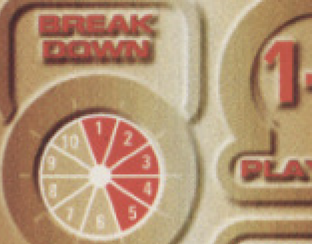
BY: OCEAN

RELEASE: MARCH

PRICE: £44.99

GAME TYPE: PINBALL

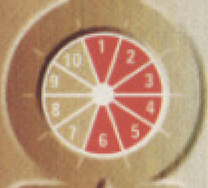
BREAK DOWN



ORIGINALITY



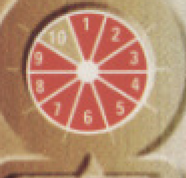
CHALLENGE



ACTION



STRATEGY



REFLEXES

OPTIONS

CONTROL: JOYPAD
GAME DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM
CONTINUES: NONE
SKILL LEVELS: 1
RESPONSIVENESS: GOOD

ORIGIN

Produced for Ocean by Digital Illusions, veterans of computer pinball games.

GAME AIM

Score mega millions by performing table combos and bonuses.

BEAT THIS

341,000,000

Pinball tables come second only to trivia games in the quick-ways-to-lighten-wage-packets-down-the-boozer-stakes. In truth, the person who invented these complex coffins of flashing lights and sound effects hit on a more effective way of making money than encouraging people to spend hours pouring brown liquid down their throats. 50p can disappear as easily as a ball slipping down the side channel or forgetting whose body was discovered in the first episode of Eastenders, for the Bellfruit edition of Noel's Telly Addicts. Profligacy of this type is not encouraged in Sweden, where it is very cold. Children there are encouraged to create their own tariff-free cardboard versions of pinball, or, in the case of Digital Illusions, generate some startlingly convincing digitsed tables for the Sega Saturn, and call them True Pinball.

GRAND CHAMPION		GRAND CHAMPION	
TSL	500,000,000	TSL	500,000,000
1 AXL	100,000,000	1 JOC	100,000,000
2 ITA	50,000,000	2 IPB	50,000,000
3 BSL	25,000,000	3 OMN	25,000,000
4 ORG	10,000,000	4 ANI	10,000,000
GRAND CHAMPION		GRAND CHAMPION	
TSL	500,000,000	TSL	500,000,000
1 JOC	100,000,000	1 AXL	100,000,000
2 IPB	50,000,000	2 DAA	83,252,500
3 OMN	25,000,000	3 ITA	50,000,000
4 ANI	10,000,000	4 AAA	38,917,500



SHOOT OFF

Keeping the ball above the flipper line is admittedly helpful, but the real skill develops more slowly, with high scores available for activating each of the four tables modes. The dot matrix display changes to show various challenges set to time limits.

LAW AND JUSTICE

FIRE FIGHT

The dot matrix display is used to take out gun-toting vigilantes for millions a pop.





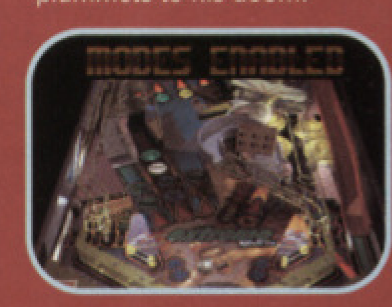




EXTREME SPORTS

BUNGEE

Ramps most be shot as your imaginary grunge-head plummets to his doom.









BABEWATCH

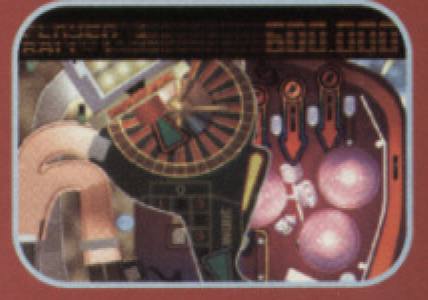
CASINO

The roulette-ish area must first be opened, then the ball snuck through the entryway for a crack at the gambling millions.





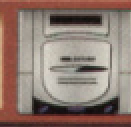




VI

ON

The ste pen



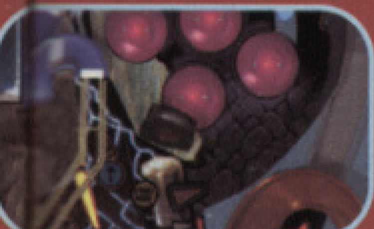


VIKINGS

ON THE ROCKS

The dot matrix is used again to steer the longship through some perilous outcrops.

















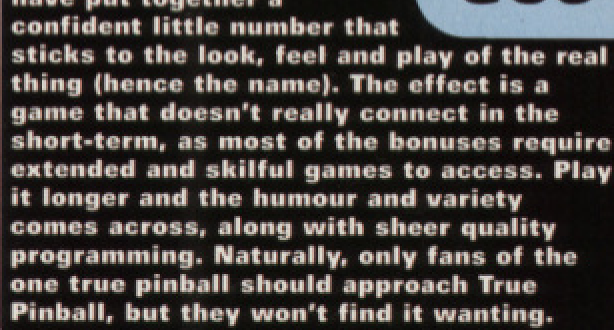


COMMENT



GUS

If you're considering True Pinball you should bear some facts in mind. Virgin's Tilt, although looking very nice, is not now due for months, and the existing alternative, Digital Pinball, is a megabore. Digital Illusions, on the other hand, have put together a confident little number that sticks to the look, feel and play of the real thing (hence the name). The effect is a game that doesn't really connect in the short-term, as most of the bonuses require extended and skilful games to access. Play it longer and the humour and variety comes across, along with sheer quality programming. Naturally, only fans of the one true pinball should approach True Pinball, but they won't find it wanting.



COMMENT



MISS F.

Hi there fellas. I'm Miss Flipper, the hit with the flips. I just love playing with the balls as they roll around the table – it's fantastic. He, He, He. Anyway, you want to know about True Pinball huh? Well it's topper fun everyone. Silky graphics and some smart effects make this about as True as it can get, but it means that I'll be out of a job, because I won't be able to cavort all over the arcade machines as you'll be playing at home. Anyway, you should try posing on a Saturn. It hurts your bum no end. But enough about me and my glamorous showbiz lifestyle. As my friend Gussy said, this is definitely one for the pinball fans and maybe it'll convert the non flippers among you. It may be worth a look. Anyway, I've got a bit more exposure work. Now, where's my eyebrow pencil?

RESOLUTELY

One aspect of choice afforded by True Pinball is the viewing perspective. Initially, when we looked at the game in preview form a couple of months back, the 3-D view made things quite difficult, and the flat, scrolling 'top' view was preferred. However, the finished version's raked view on the highest resolution is both a realistic portrayal of how a table looks, and comfortable enough to play on. However, as 'our Graham' would put it, the choice is yours.



GRAPHICS 69

▲Tables capture the look and layout of a nuts and bolts table nicely.
▼The game's entire repertoire becomes familiar very quickly.

ANIMATION 65

▲The ball moves well and always stays in vision.
▼No swanky attempts at scaling or panning the camera angle.



MUSIC 81

▲That Viking music is just crazy.

EFFECTS 83

▲The cheesiness, abruptness and disparate nature of many of the effects is strangely apt for a pinball game.

PLAYABILITY 86

▲Should meet with approval from genuine fans.
▼The less dedicated amongst us may, conceivably, get bored.

LASTABILITY 84

▲A reasonable amount of depth for each table.
▼The lack of a ram save for scores is a nasty ommission.

OVERALL

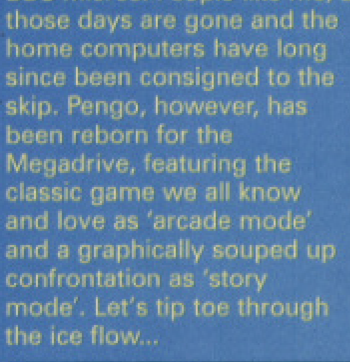
True Pinball is both veracious and vivacious. A successful outing with flippers for Ocean.

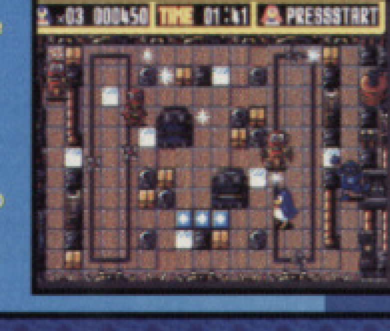






Many animals have lent their athletic prowess to video games – hedgehogs, worms and squirrels have all taken the limelight, Mother Nature squeezing her way through tunnels and over platforms with varying degrees of success.
Of all the animals you could wish to put through their paces, penguins wouldn't be an obvious choice – our lardy little Arctic friends are flightless birds who waddle along firm ground, only coming into their own once they've belly-flopped into the water. Indeed, some have argued that their greatest contribution to Western civilisation is the tasty filling they provide for a well-known brand of chocolate biscuit.
Many moons ago, however, penguins were the stars of an elderly coin-op which saw our chubby chums skate around, propelling huge blocks of ice at blobby little Pac-man type creatures. Pengo was a cheeky little puzzle game which found its way onto a variety of systems, providing endless hours of fun for annoying adolescents hunched over their ZX Spectrums and BBC Micros. People like me, basically. Anyway, those days are gone and the home computers have long since been consigned to the skip. Pengo, however, has been reborn for the Megadrive, featuring the classic game we all know and love as 'arcade mode' and a graphically souped up confrontation as 'story mode'. Let's tip toe through the ice flow...

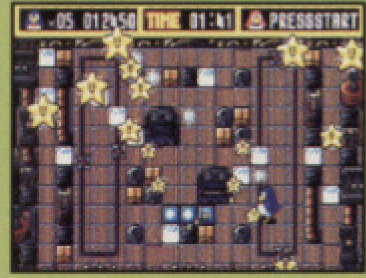






P-P-P PICK UP A...

Bonuses can be arrived at in the same way in this as in the original – each level contains three diamond blocks which look a little different from the common or garden ice blocks you usually push around. Line these three blocks up against each other and your points tally will be accordingly swelled. Other useful power-ups come in the form of clocks (which freeze the progress of the ticking time limit for a while), ice shovels, extra points and extra lives. Watch out for ball and chain icons, which slow you down, and a curious little icon which annoyingly reverses the results of all your joypad presses – forward sending you backwards, left sending you right etc.





Multi-block bonus frenzies in story and arcade modes.







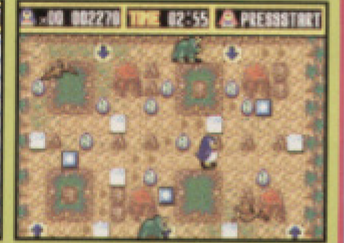
The Dino World boss cops an ice block where it hurts.

More Jurassic japes – there's a dinosaurus in every corner.

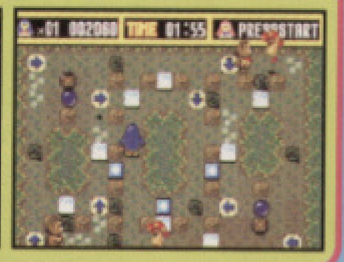
STORY MODE

Assuming the people you challenge are more ingenious than the little brown seals and blow fish you're otherwise up against, this part of Pengo really comes into its own with other people. Up to four players can plug in to this (in 'Battle Mode') and slug it out in a variety of locations which stretch the very basic format about as far as it can go. However seemingly fiendish the settings, the basic principle of shoving ice blocks all over the shop remains unchanged.



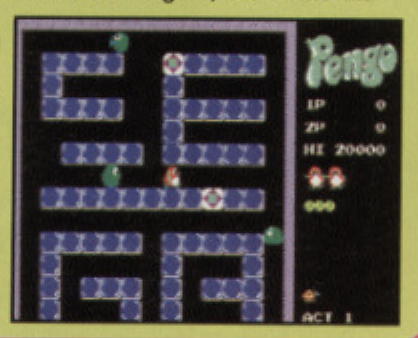






ARCADE MODE

Ask your dad about this – he's bound to remember the fun he had as a lad, pushing little ice blocks around increasingly taxing screens. This is a faithful facsimile of the early Eighties fave – you have to scoot around a simple maze of ice blocks, pursued by blobby things which steadily gain speed. You play as the little red penguin Pento, out to quash (or should that be squash?) the blobby Sno-bees. Manoeuvre the blobby things into compromising positions and kick ice blocks into them, crushing them against walls. While the blue ice blocks disintegrate on impact with their targets, the white diamond ones can be kicked around any number of times. Just make sure you don't knock them into a corner – they're impossible to kick back out again.



COMMENT



MARCUS

Although this is a game I used to play a lot as a kid, it's not a title I hold a lot of nostalgia for. In fact, I'd forgotten it even existed until this Megadrive carbon copy turned up. While faithful to the game as I remember it, this has been given go faster stripes in the form of the story mode (don't ask me what the story is – it's all in Japanese) and the multi-player option. None of this, however, can detract from the feeling this really is a little too old and cranky to merit any serious attention in 1996. The sticky controls don't help matters much – there's nothing more likely to put you off a game than having a carefully prepared victory snatched away from you as you watch yourself helplessly skidding towards a ram-raiding teddy bear. For no obvious reason. Completing puzzle games should give you a glow of smug superiority. This brings more a sense of relief that it's all over.

COMMENT



STEVE

Whoops. Bit of a cock up here methinks. A puzzle game with Penguins in isn't exactly the formula for a winning game is it? I mean it's not bad, but it just doesn't do anything new for the genre. The speed is the main problem in my view. It's just too slow to pick up the entertainment value, hence I have no desire to play it any further. The multi player option prevents it from being a complete disaster of a game. In a word: Average.

GRAPHICS 74

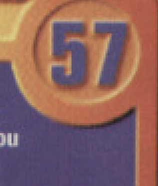


▲Faithful to the original game.
▼Fiddly little sprites and slow generation.

ANIMATION 68

▼Erm, well their little legs move as they waddle along...

MUSIC 78



▲The retro tunes bring back the golden age of 'synth something simple.'

EFFECTS 57

▼Erm, well let's just say that there's nothing here to distract you from the game.

PLAYABILITY 75



▲A simple idea, fairly well executed.
▼Nowhere near as compelling as Lemmings, Worms, or even Zoop.

LASTABILITY 69

▼Well, I never want to play it again, put it that way.

OVERALL

A simple old fave that simply doesn't cut it any more. One for nostalgics and Pingu fans only.



PGA TOUR® 96

There is only so much you can say about golf games to make them sound interesting. And there are even less jokes you can make about golf games after the bog standard balls gags, and digs at Nick Faldo having all the charisma of John Major. The truth is that there isn't much left to shout about. But, in time honoured tradition, we at MEAN MACHINES have braved the elements to bring you yet another Game Gear review (two in two months, pass me the oxygen mask – Gus), and this time it's PGA Tour '96 under the spotlight. It is a basic conversion from the Megadrive game and sticks to the elements that made the other games such a success. The swing meter, overheads, and view switch are all basic versions of the Megadrive counterparts, toned down a bit to incorporate the drastically reduced memory capacity of the Game Gear. The three courses seen on the Megadrive version remain, however: TPC Summerlin, TPC at Sawgrass (the old grandpa of the courses) and TPC at River Highlands. All of the game styles are here as well – practice whole rounds or just driving and putting, as well as playing tournaments or skins challenges.

RELEASE: ....OUT NOW
PLAYERS:.......................1
BY: ....SEGA

MEG:.............................. 4
PRICE:.......................£29.99
GAME TYPE:......GOLF SIM



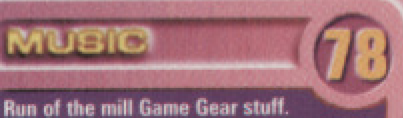

GRAPHICS 82
Quite close to the originals, considering it's the Game Gear.

EFFECTS 76
The chirping bird noise is appalling.




ANIMATION 85
Fluid on the golfer himself, and he actually looks like he is hitting the ball.

PLAYABILITY 81
Does warrant some play time, and mastering courses may take a while.



MUSIC 78
Run of the mill Game Gear stuff.

LASTABILITY 82
Three courses and all the play modes are plus points.

OVERALL 80
A good attempt at a golf game, and probably the best you'll get on the Game Gear.









Arctic golf – not one of the more hospitable courses.

CUE CAMERA ONE

One of the changeable options is the ability to turn the switch view on and off. This was one of the standard parts of the Megadrive game, and added that little bit more realism when the view switched to the back of the green facing the way your shot has just come from. You could watch as your ball trickled its way towards the hole. The same option is available here as well, but not quite in the same manner. The view does change, but only moves up to the final 30 or so yards of your shot, and facing the same way you hit from.

COMMENT



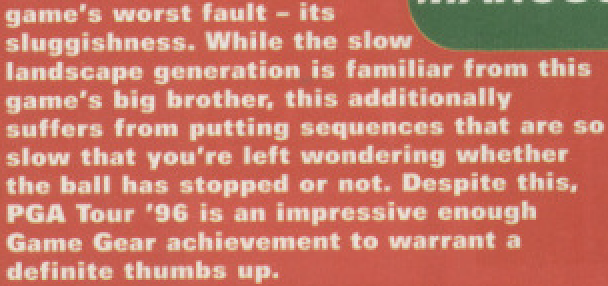
STEVE

PGA Golf is at the top of the tree when it comes to Megadrive golf games. Nothing can come close to it in terms of playability or anything else for that matter. Game Gear PGA is good, but doesn't scale the heady heights of its older, big brother. The problem is mainly that the GG just can't cope with the graphical touches that need to be included to make the game what it is, hence the awfully slow loading time for every little section. It takes an eternity to load up holes, and if you do switch on the View Change option, it takes even longer to finish drawing the backgrounds and hole details. But generally, forgetting the slow sections, it is a good game, with a surprising three courses and lots of variants to just playing a tournament. Worth investing in if you're a big fan.

COMMENT



MARCUS



This is so faithful to last year's superb Megadrive version that there's little more to say about this pocket-sized putter. As far as Game Gear golf goes, this is surely the last word, only noticably suffering by eccentuating the Megadrive game's worst fault – its sluggishness. While the slow landscape generation is familiar from this game's big brother, this additionally suffers from putting sequences that are so slow that you're left wondering whether the ball has stopped or not. Despite this, PGA Tour '96 is an impressive enough Game Gear achievement to warrant a definite thumbs up.





GOLDEN JOYSTICKS AWARDS 1996

YES! THE WAITING IS OVER.
It's that time of year when we, the kids (or you lot, anyway) get the chance to vote for the toppermost of the poppermost in EMAP Images' glittering Golden Joystick Awards. If you seriously care about the games you play, and want to give something back to the industry that gives you so much, then cast your vote now. Your opinions count, and are in no way a poor excuse for us to guzzle free Champers at Claridges, wallowing in decadence not seen since Roman times. As an admittedly pathetic incentive to post your votes to us, all the forms will be jammed inside Lucy's handbag – the senders of the first ten she picks out next time she pops to the loo will each receive a free year's subscription to MEAN MACHINES. Huzzah!

SEND TO: GOLDEN JOYSTICKS, MEAN MACHINES SEGA, EMAP IMAGES, 30-32 FARRINGDON LANE, LONDON EC1R 3AU.

1.BEST CONSOLE ADVERTISEMENT
Choose from 1995's vast selection of rib-tickling ads and promos.

BEST CONSOLE ADVERTISEMENT:

2. BEST HAND-HELD GAME
Only the small screen variety will be considered.

BEST HAND-HELD GAME:

3. BEST GAME MUSIC
At last – the Game Gear's chance to shine.

BEST GAME MUSIC:

4. BEST LICENSED 16-BIT CONSOLE GAME
VR Troopers or Power Rangers. Tricky, isn't it?

BEST LICENSED 16-BIT CONSOLE GAME:

5. BEST LICENSED 32-BIT CONSOLE GAME
Tear yourself away from Street Fighter: The Movie to consider this.

BEST LICENSED 32-BIT CONSOLE GAME:

6. BEST ORIGINAL 16-BIT CONSOLE GAME
The Megadrive market is still Sega's biggest, what was the system's finest game in 1995?

BEST ORIGINAL 16-BIT CONSOLE GAME:

7. BEST ORIGINAL 32-BIT CONSOLE GAME
Will there be any surprises here, or will Sega's 'Big Three' dominate?

BEST ORIGINAL 32-BIT CONSOLE GAME:

8. 16-BIT CONSOLE GAME OF THE YEAR
Who wins out, licensed or otherwise?

16-BIT CONSOLE GAME OF THE YEAR:

9. 32-BIT CONSOLE GAME OF THE YEAR
What was the outstanding Saturn title of 1995?

32-BIT CONSOLE GAME OF THE YEAR:

10. BEST CONSOLE DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR
Who came up with the goods during last year?

BEST CONSOLE DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR:

11. BEST TECHNICAL INNOVATION
This can apply to hardware or software – what was the greatest step forward, and who was responsible?

BEST TECHNICAL INNOVATION:

12. SOFTWARE HOUSE OF THE YEAR
Who published the finest titles of the year?

SOFTWARE HOUSE OF THE YEAR:

NAME:...

ADDRESS:...

....TELEPHONE NUMBER:......................

MACHINE OWNED:...

With the market for top quality games now dominated by the next generation consoles and PCs, Sega are diversifying into a new market. On March 15th, the first of Sega's budget PC titles are launched. Enhanced conversions of Megadrive/Mega-CD games, these are apparently the first of many. Our resident PC boffin Pat Fox powered up his Pentium for us...

ECCO THE DOLPHIN

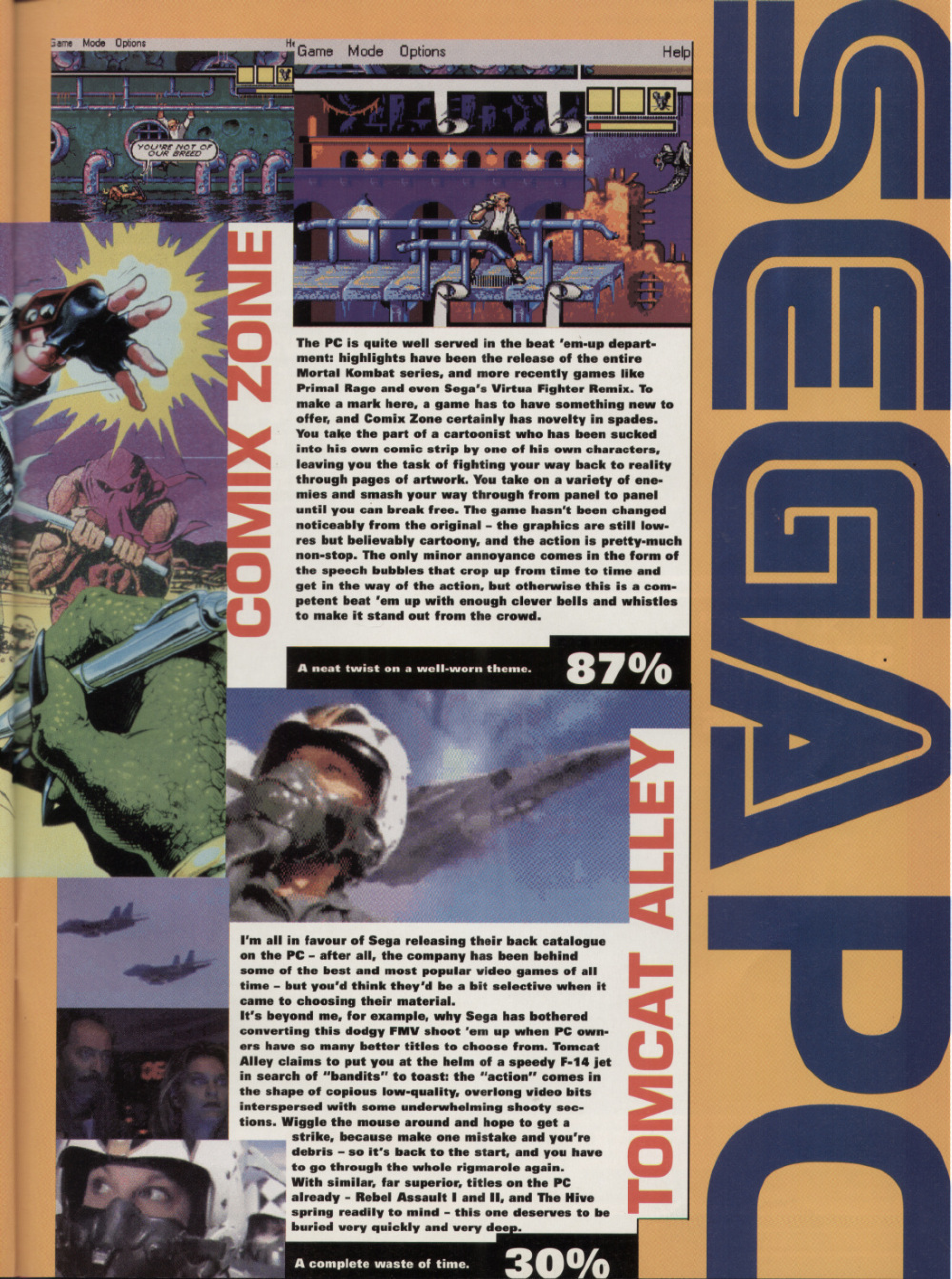


This game is a curiously compelling beast, and perhaps unique in its construction and style. It looks set to become as distinctive in the crowded PC market as it was when it originally appeared on the Megadrive a few years back.

I wasn't sure what to expect from Ecco the Dolphin: I had heard all about the environmental themes and non-violent gameplay and to be honest wasn't too keen, but once I gave it a play I found that at the very least it offered a bit of variety – your objectives vary from level to level, so it doesn't get too dull too quickly, but to be honest it's all a bit too slow-moving to get you really excited. The graphics have been marginally improved for this version, with a hi-res option available.

This isn't by any means a bad game, and it's certainly different to your average run-and-jump-and-collect-type fare, but it is a bit lacking in the excitement department. I much prefer underground adventures of the Earthworm Jim variety.

Seductive, but a bit sedate. **80%**



COMIX ZONE

The PC is quite well served in the beat 'em-up department: highlights have been the release of the entire Mortal Kombat series, and more recently games like Primal Rage and even Sega's Virtua Fighter Remix. To make a mark here, a game has to have something new to offer, and Comix Zone certainly has novelty in spades. You take the part of a cartoonist who has been sucked into his own comic strip by one of his own characters, leaving you the task of fighting your way back to reality through pages of artwork. You take on a variety of enemies and smash your way through from panel to panel until you can break free. The game hasn't been changed noticeably from the original – the graphics are still low-res but believably cartoony, and the action is pretty-much non-stop. The only minor annoyance comes in the form of the speech bubbles that crop up from time to time and get in the way of the action, but otherwise this is a competent beat 'em up with enough clever bells and whistles to make it stand out from the crowd.

A neat twist on a well-worn theme. **87%**

TOMCAT ALLEY

I'm all in favour of Sega releasing their back catalogue on the PC – after all, the company has been behind some of the best and most popular video games of all time – but you'd think they'd be a bit selective when it came to choosing their material.

It's beyond me, for example, why Sega has bothered converting this dodgy FMV shoot 'em up when PC owners have so many better titles to choose from. Tomcat Alley claims to put you at the helm of a speedy F-14 jet in search of "bandits" to toast: the "action" comes in the shape of copious low-quality, overlong video bits interspersed with some underwhelming shooty sections. Wiggle the mouse around and hope to get a strike, because make one mistake and you're debris – so it's back to the start, and you have to go through the whole rigmarole again.

With similar, far superior, titles on the PC already – Rebel Assault I and II, and The Hive spring readily to mind – this one deserves to be buried very quickly and very deep.

A complete waste of time. **30%**



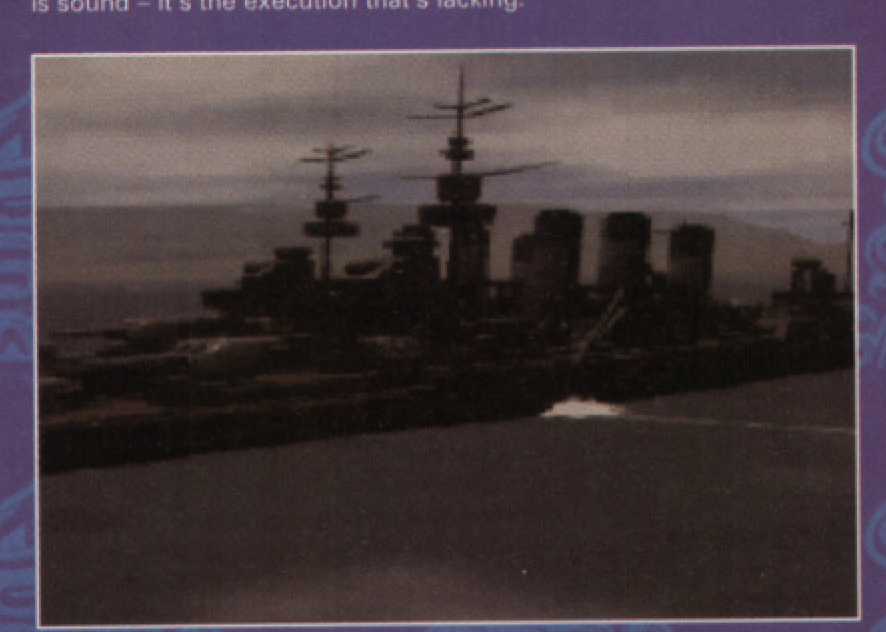
Not the greatest month for Sega releases, with most owners still recovering their balances after splurging out on Sega's AM2 conversions. Acclaim are left to make the serious splurge. Be patient, true believers, as hope springs eternal.

WING ARMS
SEGA
£44.99
1 PLAYER
SHOOT 'EM UP



MEAN MACHINES first reviewed this about, oh must have been the end of the Second World War now. Which is funny, because that's the Wing Arms theme. Rather than do a boring mini-review, let's speculate on why it has taken so long for this 'top' game to appear.

When we first saw Wing Arms last year, it did indeed look very topper. Kind of 'still early in development promising' kind of topper. But it didn't really get any better. And then all this lovely AM2 stuff came along and Wing Arms kind of slipped out of the picture. But now it's back! And admittedly, it's ropeyness in parts is made all the more visible by the leap forward in Saturn 3-D with the AM2 titles. Now, Wing Arms's six level joust with planes, ships and the odd desert-bound oil rig, looks a bit lame. But, there's no denying that Wing Arms is actually incredibly good fun in places, and quite impressive too when streams of ack-ack fire are bursting from the decks of huge aircraft carrier. Also, the stirring martial music is excellent through stereo speakers, you just want to sling on a pair of jackboots and march all over Europe! The concept is sound – it's the execution that's lacking.







WWII action and some WWI programming. You won't be blitzed but you may come away with some war nostalgia.

HANG ON GP
SEGA
£44.99
1-2 PLAYERS
RACING

OUT NOW

You would imagine that the crew would have jumped at the chance of dressing from head to toe in leather and thrusting something throbbing between the legs (well, we couldn't resist all the usual hackneyed motorbike jokes). However, Hang On is less than a turn on compared to all Sega's other racers, and that fails to take account of the forthcoming Wipeout. The problem is principally graphics and handling, but not in that order. Hang On is generally unrealistic and oversensitive in handling, and its polygon courses insipid and uninteresting. Although it's an attempt at creating an arcade-style driving game, and it is the only bike game for the Saturn, we'd advise you to overlook this in favour of Sega Rally.



OVERALL 68

In Saturn terms it's a case of four wheels good and two wheels bad. For the moment at least.

X-MEN: CHILDREN OF THE ATOM
ACCLAIM
£44.99
1-2 PLAYERS
BEAT 'EM UP

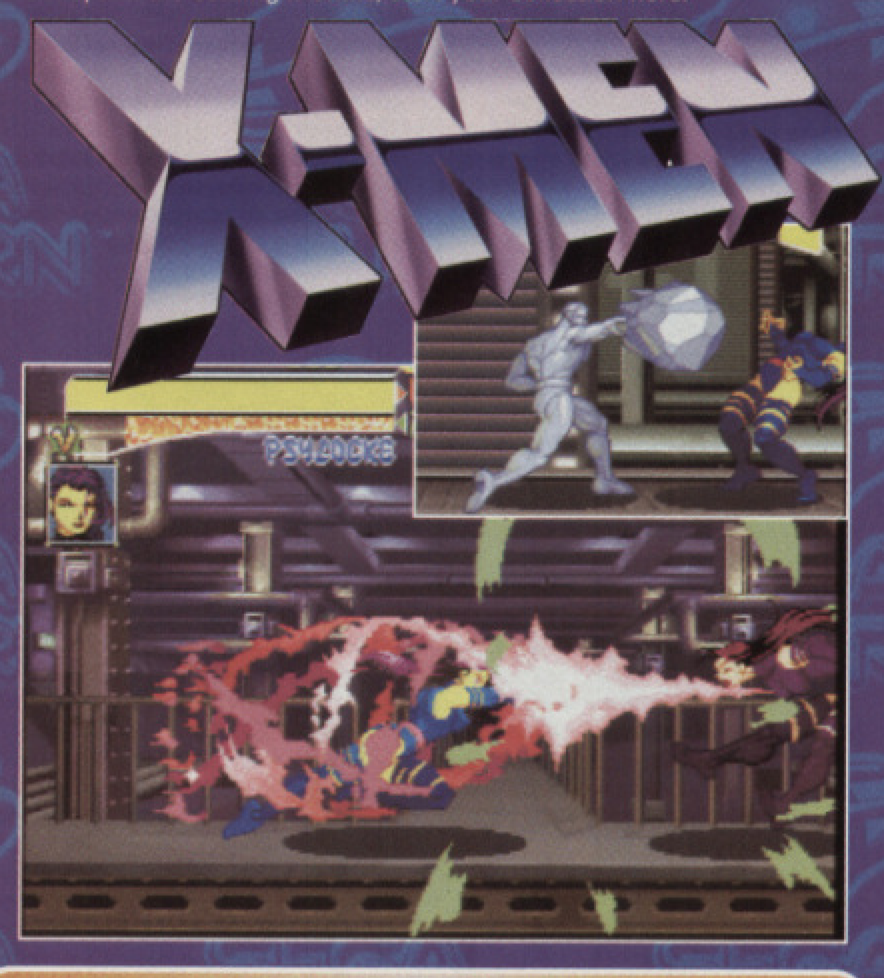
OUT NOW

If I were Acclaim, I'd be mightily pee'd off that X-Men was the only Capcom title I had in my release closet. But, as Alan Partridge would say, of course I'm not. I shall leave it to the Tyrell Corporation of the software world to console themselves with this utterly blinding beat 'em up.

Despite looking a bit wobbly in the arcades next to AM2's polygon stuff, Capcom have a conversion of the X-Men arcade machine so good that it proves they are to video games what 'Youngs' are to seafood. They are 'Masters'. X-Men is a 'conventional' horizontally scrolling beat 'em up, but it impresses each and every time you play with its fabulous graphics. Not only are the colouring and resolution excellent, the most important aspect — the essence of the comic characters — has been respectfully conveyed in the marvellous animations and outrageous moves.

X-Men also differs in some aspect from the MK series that Acclaim were once better known for. Capcom have saught to make the game accessible by keeping most of the moves easy to perform, even the spectacular specials. For that reason, most bouts are a series of dizzying, dazzling pyrotechnics, which makes the game confusing and exhilarating in equal measure.

Capcom have not stinted in aspects of presentation, with a finish that the term 'craftsmanship' best describes, and indeed, they've provided a full-screen optimised speed version for PAL owners. Although you naughty boys and gals are going to spoilt with top-quality beat 'em ups in the coming months, start your collection here.



OVERALL 94

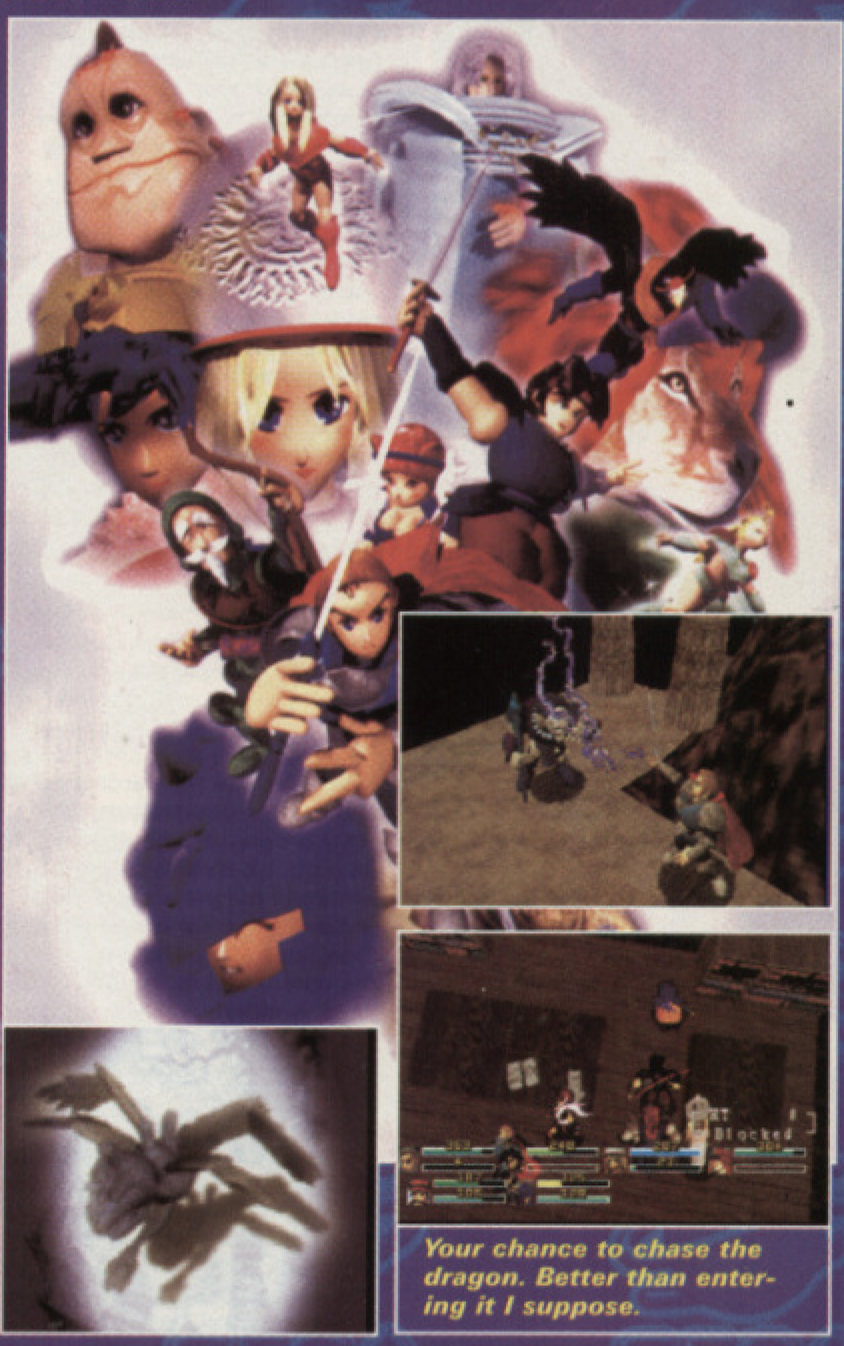
An exquisite, explosive, atmospheric, Stratospheric Utopia of line-drawn ultraviolence!

MYSTARIA: REALMS OF LORE
SEGA
£44.99
1 PLAYER
RPG

OUT NOW

MEAN MACHINES gave this the highest mark of any UK mag. Why did they do that? Was it pressure tactics from our evil Sega masters? No, it was because we played it. The pictures shown in other reviews of other mags showed how little of the game the reviewers had actually played, whereas we had got many hours into the adventure and still were nowhere near completing it.

Well, this game is for RPG players. You've got to want to play it to enjoy it. Globally the game has met with acclaim from RPG games-players who appreciate titles of this type. It does has some weaknesses of presentation, but otherwise it's an absolutely premium Saturn release.



Your chance to chase the dragon. Better than entering it I suppose.

OVERALL 90

Sadly underrated in many quarters, Mystaria is an example of good role-play gaming.

MEAN YOB

Stop press news! We have been working with Sega's top developers AM3, and I am now pleased to announce that the finishing touches to the Saturn Yob game are almost in place – we'll have a full review next issue. The game is based solely on me, and it is your task to guide me through the bowels of EMAP Towers, traversing all of the floors and the various magazines in a quest to find Lord EMAP and earn yourself a promotion by licking his boots. At present the game is Saturn only, and will have a 3-D fighting section in which I take on each of the people from our mag, Saturn mag and C&VG, in order to get to the final floor. Other tasks include avoiding the mad people on the 3rd floor, worshipping the Masters, and avoiding the tipping power that is Ed Lomas. As I said, we'll have plenty more on the final version soon, and expect to see the game on the shelves around mid-summer of this year. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the game, write me at I CAN'T WAIT FOR YOUR GAME, YOB'S MAILBAG, MEAN MACHINES SEGA, PRIORY COURT, 30-32 FARRINGDON LANE, LONDON, EC1R 3AU.

IT'S GOING TO BE GREAT!

Dear Yob,
I think you are the hardest person I know, so please print my letter. Here we go. I am buying an Ultra 64 (not), I love Nintendo (not), the Nintendo mag is wicked (not). Nintendo has always been better than Sega (not). Okay, let's cut out the nots! I was laying in bed last night wondering why I purchase the killer MEAN MACHINES SEGA, and I concluded that it's because it's got you in it. Don't you just wonder why Nintendo are CRAP?
Ameel Beshoom, Southend-On-Sea
YOB: Well readers, here we have the winner for our most pointless letter of the month. And your prize is....(drum roll) a one way ticket to The Isle of Man, and next week's winning Lottery ticket I hope you have a fantastic time, and don't ever bother coming back. Don't forget that lottery ticket.

OUT IN APRIL

Dear Yob,
Well someone seems to have suffered an exploding stick of dynamite up the ass. I refer of course to the letter from Donald Wokoma in issue 40. Bleedin' hell, take some Valium! So what if your picture was put a bit too close to the border of the sad corner? Before you slag someone off at least have the brains to CHECK YOUR FACTS! Hell, if anyone should be shooting their monolithic gob off it should be me. I spend about 6 weeks on my design a Virtua Fighter compo, with more moves info, background and frames of animation than one of Yu Suzuki's worst nightmares, and what do I get? I minute picture of one of my multiple pages and a single sentence! But like the Murphys, I'm not bitter. I'm not such an egotistical asswipe that I scream "I SHOULD HAVE WON!" or say I'll never buy the mag again, just 'cos someone else won a Saturn and a load of games. I admit my man Kamrajiri could have benefited from more moves and originality, whereas I just concentrated on what I'm best at, Anime style artwork. The moral – check exactly what they're looking for and don't just go for an artwork blitz like I did. Also, be a pessimist. I didn't expect to win, as I've never won sod all, but does that change the fact that Saturn Mag is one of the two best Sega publications ever? (You are reading the other one now).No, I didn't win, but I'm not bothered and I didn't get steamed over the mag about it. Also, at least I got a picture published. So before you have a go at magazines because you don't like how they positioned your picture, think of all the countless thousands who haven't even got a picture in. If I get this letter printed, (No, I won't say "Please print this letter coz I buy your mag every month, honest!"), then It'll be the new year by then, so I'll just say that I hope everyone had a prosperous time in Japan, (I'm not really jealous. No, Not at all (!)), a grand Christmas, too much to eat, a big raise from Lord EMAP, a Saturn with VF2, etc. etc. A big belated Merry Christmas to everyone. Ho Ho Ho! Now I'll continue watching Miracle on 34th Street. I have the urge to be nice... I'll return, mortals. Goodbye.
Paul "PJ. 96" Johnson, My Presidential Citadel.
YOB: He's back. Mr Paul Johnson, the man with the addled brain, has returned after giving us the lowdown on his safari through Elvis' sideys, to now give us his views on losing a competition. To his credit, his robot Sonic picture we printed a while back was ace, but this guy must have so much time on his hands languishing in the

Ultimate MK (Minging Kilt) Gus the Third leads his team forward into battle with cries of "Turn the heating on!; me tinkle's cold".



The Story of Thor by Dylan Wynne. Nice Choller Whollers! Dream on Kiddo!

institution that he can spend a bit of time getting his paintings just right. Paul, we salute you – you're an artist.

AWESOME GRAPHICS

Dear Yob,
I'm just writing in to congratulate you and the rest of the staff on becoming 'official' – the mag is looking better than ever. However, I have one complaint!
When I purchased your January Issue I was overcome with joy with the free CD. In the previous month you mentioned its arrival in the Next Month column of December's issue. Before that you gave away a free EarthWorm Jim 2 review booklet and when I purchased said issue, I was minus my EWJ freebie, simply because there was no previous mention and as a result I didn't know any better and therefore missed out!
I don't want it to sound like I'm complaining but a brief mention in the Next Month bit would help us devoted readers not miss out on our freebies. It might also give you something to write about in that neglected column. I was a tad distraught as I am a massive Jim fan, and I had no idea how the game would be received. I had the game for Christmas and loved every bit of it. Fortunately, I read your 'Cream of Sega' feature and was relieved to see that Jim 2 was highly praised, as I only buy games you review, and only go for 90% or more. Keep up the good work.
P.S. Please tell me Jim 2 got over 90%, otherwise I'll look like a pregnant fish!
Dylan Wynne, Holywell, Wales.
YOB: Obviously the people in Wales are so bloody tight that instead of buying the whole mag they nick the gift on the front to get a small taster. These are the people who go into a shop and read the mag whilst they are there, and then put it back again. Here's some advice for all the Welsh gift nickers: sell some sheep (and your wellies) for a bit of extra cash, and then buy the ENTIRE mag. Oh, by the way, 95%.

FIRST DAY OF THE MONTH

Dear Yob,
I have never really been interested in you before, but now I think you are brilliant. Could you please put my picture on display because I have put a lot of work into it. Could you also tell me all of the cheats to Mortal Kombat 2 because it's my best game. Could you please send me back the cheats.
P.S. What I really want to know is how to get to Goro's lair.
Kevin Bradley, Bradwell Gt. Yarmouth.
YOB: No.

NO FOOLING

Oi Yob the Knob,
In your No 40 issue, you said that you got 7 under par on the first round of PGA Tour '96. Try putting your willy back inside your trousers and beat this: 32 under par for the tournament.
PS I think the mag is totally crap. I only bought it because it was the only one in the shop. I'm now using it as bog paper.
P.P.S Lose some weight you fat git and print this letter or the next one will contain a bomb, OK?
W. Inner, Shanklin, Ilse of Wight
YOB: Get lost and buy a Saturn. Keep up with the times, Brady Bunch.



X-cellent X-Men by Gary Zammit from Southend in Essex.

And on that note, I'll love you and leave you. Needless to say you'll be hearing from me again next month. Goodbye, asswipes.



Come and have a go if you think you're hard enough! Quite a few of you were afraid, very afraid, of my sweet little photo last month. Can't think why. I thought it was rather cuddly. Bloody expensive anyway, but Lord Emap was paying, so what the hell. Let's get this over with, so I can get to the shops for a Mars Dark. Write to me at GEOGRAPHICAL DUVET OR SOMETHING, Q&A, MEAN MACHINES SEGA, 30-32 FARRINGDON LANE, LONDON, EC1R 3AU.

BOWIE

Dear Gus,
Please could you answer my questions.
1. When will Cool Spot Goes to Hollywood be coming out for the Saturn?
2. Do you like Meat Loaf?
3. Will Road Rash 4 be coming out for the Megadrive, and if so, when?
4. Will an Earthworm Jim game be coming out for the Saturn?
5. When will Panzer Dragoon 2 be released for the Saturn?
6. What is your favourite Saturn game?
7. What's your favourite sandwich?
8. Will Doom ever come out for the Megadrive?



Mark Henshaw, Peterborough.
GUS: **1. Looks like September now. See the gossip section in news for details of the 'wobbly' at Virgin US.**
2. Nah, apart from 'Deadringer for Love'.
3. I doubt it. 16-bit sequels are a bit thin on the ground.
4. Yes, a Jim 2 conversion is nearly complete.
5. Late April or May.
6. Sega Rally.
7. Tesco's Cheese and Onion on wholemeal. (cheese must always be grated in sarnies).
8. No.

COCKER

Dear Gus,
I have some rather taxing questions for you.
1. I maybe going over to the US of A for an extended holiday this summer, and I want to take my Megadrive. Will I have to change the AC adaptor and aerial fittings in order for this to work?
2. Does the same apply for a U.K Saturn?
3. If I was to buy a a Saturn over there instead, what would I need to make it work over here?
4. I take it the games run on any version (being on CD).
5. Do EA games require a converter if they are American in order for them to work over here on a Megadrive?
6. Will American Saturn RAM cartridges work on a U.K. machine?
7. As I understand it, the U.K. Saturn comes with a scart lead, but I have an R.F. telly, I take it I have to buy the separate RF lead. I know the answer will probably be 'yes,' but I know that the Sega PICO also comes with a scart lead, and if you have an RF tele, Sega will do an exchange. Do you think Sega will do the same with the Saturn?
Dylan Wynne, England.
GUS: **1. Yes, the TV system and voltge supply are different. It's a pain, don't do it.**
2. Yes.
3. You say later you have an RF telly. It will not work with that system.
4. No, they are 'locked out' by the Saturn hardware, however an adaptor bypasses that problem.
5. Most titles, including EA ones, do.
6. No.
7. Sega now will not generally exchange a SCART lead for RF lead. Anyway, keep the SCART lead for the overdue moment you move into the 20th century and get a telly that will allow you to appreciate the hardware.

NUMAN

Dear Gus,
Please answer my questions about the Saturn.
1. When are the following games going to be released: Road Rash, King of the Spirits, Indy 500, Street Racer, Manx TT and any Playstation racing games (Destruction Derby)?
2. Is Doom going to be released for the Saturn, if so when and will it be compatible with the gun that comes with Virtua Cop?
3. Are any of the Lotus Turbo Challenges from the Megadrive going to be turned into Saturn versions?
4. Are any of EA's strikes series coming out for the Saturn (I know Thunderhawk 2 is ace)?
5. Is there going to be a Sonic game for the Saturn?
6. Have you heard any more about 'Roll Cage' the Daytona challenger? You mentioned it in the August (34) issue in the section about the E3 show.
T.H.J. (aka Three Headed Jippo)
GUS: **1, In order: June, Never, Autumn, No idea, Christmas, before the summer.**
2. Yes, but it seems like a hell of a wait. Apparently, Hexen, from Id, is due first. It won't be gun compatible.
3. Naw.
4. I think we'll see a Strike game early next year.
5. Yes, it's under way.
6. No, Steve heard about a possible Saturn version but no work has been done.

JAGGER

Dear Gus,
1. Could you please be fair with this question, because I'm relying on you for this. Could you please tell me the truth, and not that Sega are the best, just the truth. Right, what should I get, a Saturn or an Ultra 64 when it comes out in April?
2. Are Sega making a 64 bit machine? Will it be called Uranus if it is coming out?
3. Are there gonna be any Earthworm Jim games on the Saturn?
4. Do you like the look of the Ultra 64 (please be fair)? I didn't like Nintendo before, but the U64 look brilliant.
5. Is Rally better than Daytona? I think they are the same.
Jabar Al-Shukri, Middlesbrough
GUS: **1. Face some facts: the Ultra 64 is not coming in April. If it makes Christmas Nintendo will be doing well! Loads, literally millions, of people are having great fun with their Saturns now - just look at the games - and a few sad people are waiting for Mario. Live for today, man.**
2. Snigger, you're so funny. No, this machine just came out of your anus.
3. Yes, see laconic answer above (yawn).
4. The Ultra 64 stuff looks good. Is that okay?
5. Do you? Then why should I waste time trying to change your opinion, though I think you're wrong.

OAKEY

Dear Gus,
This is the first time I have written to you, so please could you answer my questions.
1. How long do you think it'll take for the Saturn's price to drop again?
2. Why do all the Ultra 64 games have 64 at the end?
3. Why did you stop printing cash for photos?
4. Is there any talk of a Mortal Kombat 4?
5. Are there any more Mega CD games this year?
6. In issue no 40, I noticed that there are three Saturn reviews and only one Megadrive review. Is it because there aren't very many Megadrive games to review or is it because the Saturn is more



interesting?
Matthew Atkins, Shively, Solihull.
GUS:**1. I honestly don't know.**
2. Because Nintendo are entirely lacking in original thinking at this impasse.
3. Because I Could.
4. Let's just get the Saturn version out first.
5. One or two, if you're lucky.
6. Last month we only had one Megadrive game (but more than three Saturn games) because that's all there was to review. If more come, we'll feature them.

HADLEY

Dear Gus,
1. How much has the Saturn version of Virtua Racing been improved over the 32X version in terms of the graphics?
2. Is it faster and better to play as well?
3. Will Fade to Black appear on the Saturn?
4. You said that Bug! and Daytona may be coming out on the 32X. How likely is this?
5. Do you think it is likely that Ultimate MK 3 will be better than the Capcom beat 'em ups?
6. Will it have full sized sprites?
7. Is the UK release of the Ultra 64 going to be before Christmas of this year?
Motaro, The Outworld.
GUS**1. Not much, if truth be told.**
2. There's more to it.
3. I hope so, but no firm release.
4. Still an outside possibility.
5. It's a matter of taste, but it's bound to be a stunning conversion.
6. Sprites on domestic tellies are always smaller to take account of the size of screen ratio.
7. Who knows — not Nintendo, that's for sure!

GOSS

Dear Gussy Boy,
Please could you enlighten me on a few subjects.
1. Are Daytona 2 and V.F. 3 being developed on an enhanced model 2 board, or a completely new board?
2. Do Sega have any rights to the 3DO's M2 accelerator? If so will it be adapted to the Saturn?
3. Will the Sonic Team's new project be released for the 32X or just Saturn?
4. What's happened to the review of Fifa 32X?
5. Could the Saturn handle the Ultra 64's Mario 64?
Danny Kerins, Southampton
GUS:**1. No specs of their development have been revealed. Daytona 2 is an imaginary project anyway — no official arcade title of that nature has been announced.**
2. There is a lot of stale breath on a Sega/M2 linkup being made at the moment. We broke the story nearly a year ago, but there has been nothing more substantial since then.
3. Just Saturn. It's a doozy!
4. Sega dropped the game, so we dropped the review.
5. Yeah, and his army.

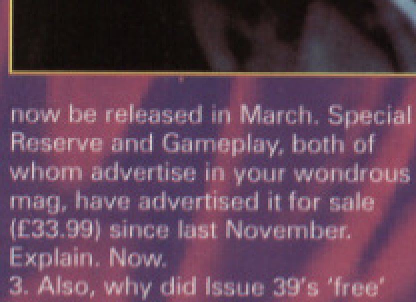
ALMOND

Dear Gus,
Will you please find the time in your busy and hectic life to answer my questions.
1. Why don't Sega and other big companies set up head offices in Ireland? I only know of two companies over here, Sony and Atari. I mean, Sega make a lot of money from Irish games players so they should show their interest in Irish opinions and set up here. What do you think?
2. Will there be a Premier Manager 2, and if so when will it be out?
3. I have not bought a next generation machine yet, as I was one of the suckers who forked out for a 32X. I just want to know honestly, which is the best machine to invest in (i.e. who will get the games) and should I wait to see what the Ultra 64 is like?
Patrick Flood, Tipperary Town, Ireland.
GUS:**1. Sega, contrary to your sad beliefs, are not a charity. They are, in fact, a business. They don't set up expensive offices and hire staff just so they can listen to your opinions on the phone. They obviously don't need an office in Ireland to conduct their business. I'm sure Heinz make a lot of money out of Irish baked bean eaters, but they hardly owe them an audience for it.**
2. No details of a sequel, but it sold so many.
3. Sorry, sucker. But Saturn is not a sucker's machine by any means. There are at least 20 must-have games for it now. I sincerely believe it is superior to Playstation.

ALBARN

Dear Gus,
I have some questions wot I want answering. Answer them or I'll eat you. Or make you watch Eldorado. Or give you a Playstation for next Xmas, and make you play it for 24 hours a day with spam sandwiches for lunch.
1. In Sega Power (yes, I did bloody well say Sega Power) there woz a bit about a 4th Strike game, Saturn Strike. Any news of a fourth Strike for the Megadrive?
2. In issue 39, you helpfully informed us of a delayed release date for Worms on the Megadrive. The article said that Worms would





now be released in March. Special Reserve and Gameplay, both of whom advertise in your wondrous mag, have advertised it for sale (£33.99) since last November. Explain. Now.
3. Also, why did Issue 39's 'free' CD add 49p to the cover price?
4. Is Domark's Total Football any good? What score did you give it?
5. I Know someone with a Master System. He/It claims it's perfectly good. Could you please explain in words of no more than one syllable THAT THEY ARE CRAP!
6. I'm a poor git who can't afford a Saturn and only buy a game every 3-4-5 months for my trusty MD. Please send me MK3 (even if it's just for being a cheeky enough git for asking.
Chris Fisher, Worcester.
GUS:**1. There is no 'news', just pure speculation.**
2. Very well, Lord Gonad. Worms WAS delayed, as you will know if you attempted to buy it. Mail order firms prepare their ads in advance, and put in some games they think will be released at the time of the mag, which is understandable. I frown upon the practice of deliberately listing games they know won't be out for months. With Worms, Team 17 delayed at quite a late stage. Satisfied?
3. The magazine did not say 'Free CD' on the cover. It said £2.99 with CD. Yes, the mag was 49p more expensive. Now, go into a record shop and see what you can get for 49p. Not very much, sunshine. We give you an exclusive, unique gift with over an hour of music and all I get is bloody abuse. Some people...
4. We didn't review it. We knew it was cackular. Acclaim knew we knew, and consequently didn't send us a cart and rush-released the game. The damage was done by the time the mag came out. The golden rule: IF IT'S NOT IN MEAN MACHINES, IT'S ST!**
5. I can't abide techno-snobs. If that's what he's got and he's happy then fine. But they are very crap.
6. I have a real problem with copies of MK3 littering my desk. But you, sadly, are last on the mailing list.

That was a bit leary. What was meant to be the advice-from-the-elder-games-statesman turned into a bit of an ugly scene at the end. If you want anything answered please write, but remember, I'm a bit handy!

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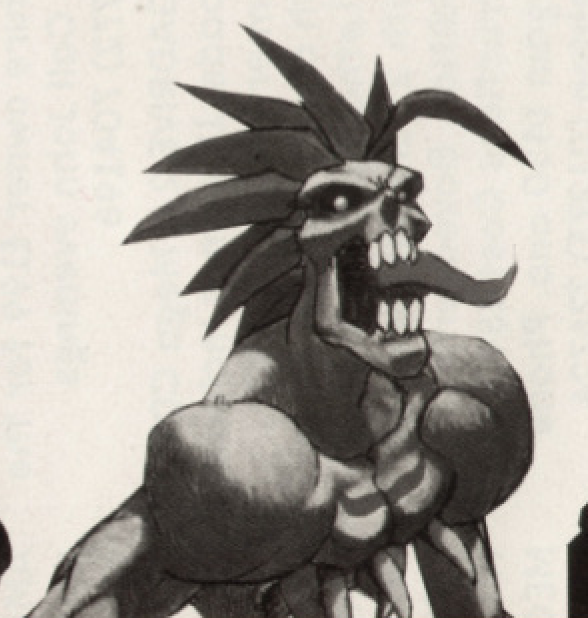
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Join us next month, when you'll be watching us, watching you, watching us, watching you! Good night, God bless.

#1	SHELLSHOCK	It will come. It has to come.
#2	LOADED	You will swear when you play it. We promise you.
#3	ULTIMATE MK	It's showtime. It's review time.
#4	DARKSTALKERS	Monster. Period.
#5	PANZER II	The delights of the deadly Bird of Paradise. The first review.


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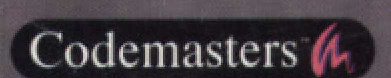








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